

Northumbria Research Link

Citation: Robson, Ian (2015) Accounting for professional identity: relating identify stories and accounts of professional practice in integrated early years services. Doctoral thesis, Northumbria University.

This version was downloaded from Northumbria Research Link:
<http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/27264/>

Northumbria University has developed Northumbria Research Link (NRL) to enable users to access the University's research output. Copyright © and moral rights for items on NRL are retained by the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. Single copies of full items can be reproduced, displayed or performed, and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided the authors, title and full bibliographic details are given, as well as a hyperlink and/or URL to the original metadata page. The content must not be changed in any way. Full items must not be sold commercially in any format or medium without formal permission of the copyright holder. The full policy is available online: <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/policies.html>

**ACCOUNTING FOR
PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY:
RELATING IDENTITY STORIES AND
ACCOUNTS OF PROFESSIONAL
PRACTICE IN INTEGRATED EARLY
YEARS SERVICES.**

I ROBSON

PhD

2015

**ACCOUNTING FOR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY:
RELATING IDENTITY STORIES AND
ACCOUNTS OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE IN
INTEGRATED EARLY YEARS SERVICES.**

IAN ROBSON

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements of the
University of Northumbria at
Newcastle for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Research undertaken in the
Faculty of Health and Life Sciences

April 2015

Abstract

This thesis presents a study concerning the narrative identity (and associated 'identity work') of four leaders working within Sure Start Children's Centres, these being integrated, multi-professional services established in England for children aged 0-5 years and their families. Specifically, it asks questions regarding the relationship between narrative identity and professional practices for these individuals, and examines ways in which they establish, maintain and deploy their narrative identities.

To investigate this topic, a narrative and hermeneutic theoretical lens is presented that draws upon and adapts the work of Paul Ricoeur (1981, 1983/1990, 1990/1994, 2005). The resulting study uses a methodology that is consistent with this framework, and employs innovative visual and participative elements in detailed work over time with participants.

Findings of the study are presented in four themes that emphasise the dynamic, connected, diverse and social character of narrative identity for participants. Here, narrative identity is discussed as something established over time, through successive 'cycles' of talk and action. Further, the study establishes the ways in which particular patterns and structures within narrative identity facilitate or constrain this development. Participants' narrative identity is discussed as existing within an ecosystem of narratives, each having a range of functions which complement relatively stable narrative identity. Finally, these narrative identities are presented as social projects, which involve others in the processes that come to define and legitimise them.

The thesis therefore emphasises the complex relationship between narrative identity and professional experience and practice for participants in the study. As a result, professional narrative identity is understood as a practical and philosophical project, and the thesis opens up lines of enquiry for further study within the early years sector and beyond.

List of contents

| | |
|---|------|
| Abstract | ii |
| List of Contents | iii |
| Tables and Figures | VIII |
| List of Accompanying material | X |
| Acknowledgements | XII |
| Authors' declaration | XIII |
| Chapter 1: Introduction | |
| Overview | p.1 |
| Background to the study | p.2 |
| Conceptualising the study | p.5 |
| Shaping questions for the study | p.7 |
| Terminology | p.8 |
| Structure of the thesis | p.9 |
| Chapter 2: Literature Review | |
| Introduction | p.13 |
| Introducing "identity" | p.15 |
| Leading in Sure Start Children's Centres | p.22 |
| The stories of Sure Start | p.26 |
| Positioning the Early Years leader: official and academic discourse | p.34 |
| The organisation as active context for leadership identity | p.41 |
| Disciplinary, pedagogic and phenomenological lenses on identity | p.48 |
| Feminist and critical voices on early years leadership identity | p.59 |
| Narrative practices and the professional self | p.62 |
| Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework | |
| The status of the framework | p.74 |
| A hermeneutic starting point | p.75 |
| Towards Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the self | p.77 |

| | |
|--|-------|
| Ricoeur's philosophy and key themes | p.78 |
| Introducing time and narrative: Ricoeur on Augustine's Confessions and Aristotle's Poetics | p.80 |
| The acting and speaking subject | p.83 |
| Summary: Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the self | p.91 |
| Self and text, text as a metaphor | p.92 |
| Distanciation | p.95 |
| Mimesis within the textual space | p.97 |
| From the hermeneutic circle to Ricoeur's mimetic spiral | p.98 |
| Ricoeur's mimetic spiral | p.101 |
| Mimesis 1, Mimesis 2 and Mimesis 3 | p.102 |
| • Mimesis 1 prefiguration | p.103 |
| • Mimesis 2 Configuration | p.104 |
| • Mimesis 3 Refiguration | p.107 |
| Summary / towards a methodology | p.109 |
| Chapter 4: Methodology | |
| Ontological and epistemological starting points | p.111 |
| A narrative, sense-making methodology | p.114 |
| A co-constructive, reflexive and progressive methodology | p.117 |
| A progressive and purposive methodology | p.121 |
| Analysis starts in the research conversations | p.123 |
| Sampling and ethical considerations | p.124 |
| Researcher and participant roles and ethical considerations | p.126 |
| Using visual artefacts in the narrative space | p.127 |
| Status and use of interpretive artefacts | p.130 |
| Designing methods | p.134 |
| Working with narrative: hermeneutic conversations | p.134 |
| Visual artefacts | p.136 |
| Table top assemblages | p.142 |

| | |
|---|-------|
| Working with maps in the conversational space | p.149 |
| Interpretive activity within, between and beyond research conversations | p.157 |
| Rationale for creating initial categories of self-talk and practice-talk | p.159 |
| Self-talk: coding, map making and using maps as artefacts | p.160 |
| Self-talk: creation and use of summary cartoons | p.163 |
| Coding within practice-talk, then between self and practice talk, then creating maps and cartoons | p.167 |
| Using self-talk and practice-talk relationship maps | p.169 |
| Beyond the sessions: hermeneutic work of distancing and appropriation | p.171 |
| Appropriation as a hermeneutic activity | p.172 |
| Towards findings and discussion | p.175 |
| Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion | |
| Introduction | p.176 |
| 'Narrative elements', 'big stories' or both? | p.177 |
| A note on findings and discussion | p.178 |
| <i>Biographical and narrative summaries for each participant</i> | |
| • Biographical summary for Chris | p.181 |
| • Biographical summary for Sharon | p.185 |
| • Biographical summary for Brenda | p.189 |
| • Biographical summary for Diane | p.194 |
| Thematic findings and discussion | p.199 |
| <i>Theme 1: Talking, doing and being</i> | p.199 |
| • Chris: Talking, doing and being | p.200 |
| • Sharon: Talking, doing and being | p.201 |
| • Brenda: Talking, doing and being | p.203 |
| • Diane: Talking, doing and being | p.205 |
| • General discussion: Talking, doing and being | p.208 |

| | |
|--|-------|
| ○ Relating showing and telling | p.211 |
| ○ Recognising, judging and using 'experience' | p.213 |
| ○ Refiguration practices | p.218 |
| ○ Towards a meaningful self | p.220 |
| ○ Towards meaningful self-talk? | p.223 |
| <i>Theme 2: Coherence and structure in narrative identity</i> | p.226 |
| • Chris: Coherence and structure in narrative identity | p.226 |
| • Sharon: Coherence and structure in narrative identity | p.230 |
| • Brenda: Coherence and structure in narrative identity | p.234 |
| • Diane: Coherence and structure in narrative identity | p.237 |
| • General discussion: Coherence and structure in narrative identity | p.241 |
| <i>Theme 3: Narrative identity as ecosystem</i> | p.247 |
| • Chris: Narrative identity as ecosystem | p.247 |
| • Sharon: Narrative identity as ecosystem | p.250 |
| • Brenda: Narrative identity as ecosystem | p.253 |
| • Diane: Narrative identity as ecosystem | p.255 |
| • General discussion: Narrative identity as ecosystem | p.257 |
| <i>Theme 4: Social mechanisms for the narrative self</i> | p.261 |
| • Chris: Social mechanisms for the narrative self | p.261 |
| • Sharon: Social mechanisms for the narrative self | p.265 |
| • Brenda: Social mechanisms for the narrative self | p.268 |
| • Diane: Social mechanisms for the narrative self | p.271 |
| • General discussion: Social mechanisms for the narrative self | p.276 |
| ○ Adapting and transforming | p.276 |
| ○ Innovation | p.278 |
| ○ Defined together | p.280 |
| ○ Recognition | p.282 |
| Chapter 6: Conclusion | p.285 |

| | |
|--|-------|
| Insight 1: Narrative resources are related, used and transformed in the development of the narrative self | p.290 |
| Insight 2: There are unique patterns of connections between narratives which support and constrain possible narrative selves | p.290 |
| Insight 3: Participants display an ecosystem of narratives that frame, maintain, defend, show, justify and separate | p.291 |
| Insight 4: Narrative identity is constructed with, and in relation to, others: affordances, recognition and reputation are key | p.292 |
| Responding to research questions | p.294 |
| Theoretical and practical implications | p.297 |
| Limitations | p.300 |
| Future research | p.302 |
| List of appendices | p.305 |
| Glossary of terms | p.339 |
| List of References | p.341 |

List of tables and figures

| | | |
|-------------|--|-------|
| Figure 1 | An overview of data configuration and refiguration in this research process | p.122 |
| Figure 2 | Themes for the first four conversations as presented to participants | p.123 |
| Figure 3 | Example cartoons | p.140 |
| Figure 4 | Brenda, Session 4, responding to the 'Trials and Tribulations' cartoon | p.142 |
| Figure 5 | Starting 'table top' work with cartoon artefacts: guide for session 4. | p.143 |
| Figure 6 | Planned stages 2-4 of 'table top' work with cartoons, questions and annotations | p.144 |
| Figure 7 | Example practice-talk (context) cartoons used in the bottom half of the table-top assemblage | p.145 |
| Figure 8 | Photograph of Sharon's completed table top assemblage from session 4 | p.146 |
| Figure 9 | Images of participants' sense-making activity with table-top assemblages | p.148 |
| Figure 10 | First set of self-talk maps | p.150 |
| Figure 11 | Second set of self-talk maps | p.151 |
| Figure 12.1 | First set of self-practice talk maps | p.152 |
| Figure 12.2 | Detail from first set of self-practice talk maps | p.153 |
| Figure 13 | Second set of self-practice talk maps | p.154 |
| Figure 14 | Planning note created for the interpretive process. | p.158 |
| Figure 15 | Summary of study title, framing questions and guiding questions. | p.159 |
| Figure 16 | First set of summary cartoons. | p.164 |
| Figure 17 | Second set of summary cartoons. | p.165 |
| Figure 18 | Example practice-talk higher level codes expressed as cartoons. | p.168 |
| Figure 19 | Diane's Self-practice talk map section illustrating connections. | p.168 |

| | | |
|-----------|--|------------|
| Figure 20 | Annotation activity with self-talk and self-practice talk maps. | p.170 |
| Figure 21 | Extract from memo work in latter stages of the study. | p.172 |
| Figure 22 | Structure of the findings and discussion chapter. | p.180 |
| Figure 23 | Chris's summary cartoon discussed in session 5. | p.184 |
| Figure 24 | Sharon's summary cartoon discussed in session 5. | p.188 |
| Figure 25 | Brenda's summary cartoon discussed in session 5. | p.193 |
| Figure 26 | Diane's summary cartoon discussed in session 5. | p.198 |
| Figure 27 | Self-Practice talk map alongside a representation of the mimetic arc. | p.209 |
| Figure 28 | Aligning the Self-Practice talk maps with the mimetic arc. | p.210 |
| Table 1 | Example transformations in talk related to cycles of mimetic activity. | p.213 |
| Figure 29 | Sharon's annotations about reflecting and 'unpicking' (judging). | p.216 |
| Figure 30 | Chris's self-talk map. | p.227 |
| Figure 31 | Chris's self-practice talk map. | p.228 |
| Figure 32 | Sharon's self-talk map. | p.231 |
| Figure 33 | Sharon's self-practice talk map. | p.232 |
| Figure 34 | Brenda's self-talk map. | p.235 |
| Figure 35 | Brenda's self-practice talk map. | p.236 |
| Figure 36 | Diane's self-talk map. | p.238 |
| Figure 37 | Diane's self-practice talk map. | p.240 |
| Table 2 | Key self-talk themes and their connections to practices talk themes. | pp.242-243 |
| Figure 38 | Participants moving and connecting narrative elements. | p.245 |
| Table 3 | Layers of narratives: stable / fluid and descriptive / evaluative. | p.259 |

List of appendices

| | |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Information sheet for potential participants |
| 2 | Potential participant response letter and consent form |
| 3.1 | Cartoons developed following Chris's first session |
| 3.2 | Cartoons developed following Chris's second session |
| 3.3 | Cartoons developed following Chris's third session |
| 4.1 | Cartoons developed following Sharon's first session |
| 4.2 | Cartoons developed following Sharon's second session |
| 4.3 | Cartoons developed following Sharon's third session |
| 5.1 | Cartoons developed following Brenda's first session |
| 5.2 | Cartoons developed following Brenda's second session |
| 5.3 | Cartoons developed following Brenda's third session |
| 6.1 | Cartoons developed following Diane's first session |
| 6.2 | Cartoons developed following Diane's second session |
| 6.3 | Cartoons developed following Diane's third session |
| 7.1 | Chris's table top assemblage images (session 4) |
| 7.2 | Sharon's table top assemblage images (session 4) |
| 7.3 | Brenda's table top assemblage images (session 4) |
| 7.4 | Diane's table top assemblage images (session 4) |
| 8.1 | Chris's practice-talk higher level codes illustrated as cartoons for work in session 5 |
| 8.2 | Sharon's practice-talk higher level codes illustrated as cartoons for work in session 5 |
| 8.3 | Brenda's practice-talk higher level codes illustrated as cartoons for work in session 5 |
| 8.4 | Diane's practice-talk higher level codes illustrated as cartoons for work in session 5 |
| 9.1 | Chris's self-talk map |
| 9.2 | Sharon's self-talk map |

| | |
|------|---------------------------------|
| 9.3 | Brenda's self-talk map |
| 9.4 | Diane's self-talk map |
| 10.1 | Chris's self-practice talk map |
| 10.2 | Sharon's self-practice talk map |
| 10.3 | Brenda's self-practice talk map |
| 10.4 | Diane's self-practice talk map |
| 11 | Glossary of terms |

Acknowledgements

Thanks to my supervisors Dr. Thomas Michael Hill and Dr. Melanie Gibson for their support and advice.

Thanks to the individuals who participated in such a generous way in the research discussed in this thesis.

Thanks to my wife Lauren and my family for their encouragement and support.

Author's declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee on 27.9.11

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 94,129 words.

Name: Ian Robson

Signature:

Date:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

In this thesis, I discuss how leaders of early childhood services ('Early Years') experience, construct and use their professional identity in day-to-day practice. I explore the practical mechanisms that such leaders use to relate their everyday practice to their narrative identities. The study focuses on individuals who were working, at the time of writing, in Sure Start Children's Centres; these being integrated, multi-professional services established in England for children aged 0-5 years and their families.

Within the thesis, I define 'professional identity' in narrative terms, primarily in relation to the work of Paul Ricoeur (1981; 1983/1990, 1990/1994, 2005). Consequently, the term 'identity' in this thesis refers to a dynamic, narrative construction which is intimately connected to lived experience, others, and is placed in the context of a "life project" (Ricoeur, 1990/1994, p.158) The thesis, in combining these elements is, therefore, is both a practical and philosophical exploration.

My thesis details primary research undertaken with four individuals in North East England working within different Sure Start Children's Centres. Consistent with a hermeneutic and a broadly ethnographic approach to identity research, they were active participants within the main phase of the research project. In that context, I supported them to discuss and reflect upon their professional selves, both shown and told.

In many ways, this is a thesis about *connections*: principally, connections between telling and showing the self, but also connections between the hermeneutic philosophy of Paul Ricoeur and concern with the idea of *practices* more familiar to ethnographic and sociological literature. I make these connections in the context of my study that is hermeneutic, heuristic

and methodologically pragmatic. In doing so, I adapt, extend and arguably re-purpose¹ some of Ricoeur's ideas about narrative selfhood.

In this introduction, I set out the background to this study, both in terms of my own position within it as a hermeneutic activity, and the context of the 'practice world' of participants. I then outline how the study of identity practices, structures and connections is relevant, problematic and under-explored, so setting out a rationale for this thesis. I follow this with details about the structure of this thesis, my research aims, questions and terminology.

Background to the study

I begin with some personal history, as this study was developed initially in response to my experience. I would also argue that in a study with hermeneutic foundations I am concerned with issues of meaning and interpretation. It is in this context that I locate myself within the thesis, rejecting the artificial perspective of an objective researcher.

Perhaps unlike those who start careers with professional qualifications, and go on in clear way to progress within those defined careers, my employment and history is characterised with diversity and an element of exploration. My professional journey started, as most do, with personal foundations. My family life introduced me to community organisation and work, principally through our local church. Volunteering, social issues and creativity were very important to me as a teenager. Following sixth form study at school and a foundation course in art and design, I deferred a place gained on a fine art ceramics degree to take a 'year out' in a voluntary community work scheme. This was a conscious step away from home, and an opportunity to challenge myself. My year as a volunteer engaged in youth and community work, AIDS care and holiday activities quickly turned into a choice to pursue these activities in the voluntary sector. Most of my twenties were spent in

¹ For example, Ricoeur's (1990/1994) work on narrative selfhood generally deals with the idea of texts in terms of historical and fictional accounts, removed from 'experience', but my own theoretical and methodological work brings the idea of the 'text' closer to practice through what I term "self-talk".

community work; with schools, local authorities, charities and directly with families in West London. During this time, outside of any conscious 'professional' paradigm, I developed into an experienced community and youth worker, focusing on community arts and education practice. It was only when I was twenty seven, and returned to the North East of England – to work as a lead community development officer for a local authority that I considered how unusual my journey had been, and that my professional culture was very different to the traditional and, indeed, alien bureaucratic culture I then worked in.

My role as a local authority officer led me to identify a tension between my informal style and a range of more formal structures and processes. I managed projects, obtained funding, developed networks, endured meetings, and entered higher education for professional and personal development. I began to articulate my informal and practical familiarity with ways of working and values in terms of 'community development'; focusing on terms such as empowerment, equality and organising to address inequality.

My work continued to focus on children and young people, but often through supporting others to do so. Another turning point came when I applied to be a team manager within a Sure Start Local Programme, which was starting in the local area. Following my appointment, I was happy to be involved in a programme that was well funded, and had lots of opportunity for innovation in supporting families with young children. At that time, I had started my own family and so became fully immersed in the early years at work and at home. Working in an integrated service alongside social workers, nursery nurses, clinical psychologists, speech and language therapists and others continued to provoke questions about 'what I was' and how I worked, as I came into contact with those whose professional style and terminology were different to my own. I continued to use my skills at relating to others who were different to me, or reaching out to those who felt alienated from services. I began to realise that part of the reason I could do this was because of my own ambiguous professional position: I could connect and relate parents of young

children to professionals and services partly because of my own liminal position between professional worlds.

Most of the time, I was happy about this but, as I continued to develop professionally and academically, I realised that *not* having a professional label continued to provoke self-questioning about who I was and what I did. Eventually, I combined a leadership role for a team and what were now named Children's Centres with a secondment at the centre of the local authority establishing its Children's Trust arrangements. Whilst I returned to Sure Start after this time, I started a consultancy providing policy development, evaluation work and similar services. One of my last significant activities within Sure Start was to embark on the National Professional Qualification for Integrated Centre Leadership (NPQICL), a master's level and professional qualification for those leading Sure Start Children's Centres.

My transition to working in higher education came through the NPQICL. Through the programme, I became aware of a post advertised by a University in the North East of England. Perhaps because I had experienced several successful transitions in job roles previously, I applied, nonetheless unsure if this was for me. By this point, I had enjoyed several years of academic study, and embraced the new ideas and ways of thinking this enabled. When I was appointed to an academic post, I experienced a further significant change in my professional life. I entered a professional culture that seemed strange to me, and felt uneasy at others' perception of me as any sort of 'expert'. I discovered that academic life allowed me to express myself personally, and to support others in new ways. I returned to questions of who (or what) I was, emphasised by the need to identify and articulate my areas of interest and expertise to the academic community. In this context, I was pleased to have the opportunity to engage in doctoral study, and in developing my ideas for this, I reflected on both personal and professional changes² I had experienced over the years, and how there were both consistencies and changes in how I practiced and talked about myself over that length of time.

² I discuss academic concepts relating to identity, and professional identity in the second chapter of this thesis.

From an early point, my ideas for this study therefore involved *professional change*. Within this theme, I began to connect ideas that were important to me to do with the meaning and purpose of work with others and the practical business of affecting change. I had spent my professional life to this point thinking about meaning; in community arts practice, through inter-personal support to staff, volunteers and those in the community, through helping others create positive stories in community mediation, constituting countless community groups, drawing up strategies for local authorities and many other activities. I was convinced that whatever any specific questions were to be within my doctoral study, they should address the relationship between the development of practice and the development of personal meaning.

Conceptualising the study

In developing the thesis I had considered the extent to which my own story or journey, outlined above, was ‘abnormal’. Further, I wondered if the questions and interests that I had in professional change, belonging and meaning making were in any way typical or suitable for wider study. In my everyday experience in talking to others – in the context of teaching, mentoring or with peers, I was convinced that many individuals demonstrated sophisticated adaptation, and relating of talk and practice in their professional lives. Academic writing on identity as role or identification did not seem to address these questions. Instead, I turned to literature which addressed *process* and *practices of becoming* and *being*, drawing on the paradigm of social constructionism (Gergen, 2009; Schwandt, 2003) and an ethnomethodological approach (Garfinkel, 1967/1984). Whilst these two sources of inspiration represented an unusual combination, I drew on them because they informed a macro *and* micro appreciation of processes and practices of becoming and being.

The ideas of social constructionism and the approach of ethnomethodology framed my thinking about narrative identity as a social activity and provided specific focus for my study. From social constructionism I considered what Gergen (2009) had stated, being that “what we take to be the world

importantly depends on how we approach it, and how we approach it depends on the social relationships of which we are a part” (p.2). This perspective prompted my thinking about how it is that any person *has come* to think, talk or practice in any given way. Building on this, Garfinkel’s (1967/1984) work on ethnomethodology directed my interest more specifically towards how things are established. Specifically, ethnomethodology’s interest in participants’ situated practices, social organisation and accounting practices (Ibid. pp.3-4) drew my attention to the idea of how talk was used in interaction.

At an early stage in the development of this study, I built upon the broad ‘framing’ of my interests inspired by social constructionism and ethnomethodology by examining studies of professional practice and learning in integrated or multi-professional settings. In doing so, I hoped to see ways in which others had conceptualised professional practice – and perhaps identity – as complex and dynamic. My consideration of this material is discussed in the next chapter. Beyond my reading of the policy and pedagogic literature, and specific studies of integrated or inter-professional collaboration, I searched for theoretical material that would connect with my own questions about professional meaning making. I identified an active, provocative (Ramsey, 2011) role for theory at an early stage of the study, not simply something to be applied following data collection. In my search, I considered theoretical starting points in Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Sannino, Daniels, & Gutierrez, 2009) pragmatic philosophy (Bernstein, 2010; Carreira de Silva, 2007) and symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969/1992). However, I eventually found that none of these frameworks were able, in their traditional forms, to meet *all* the criteria that I was steadily developing for selection of a theoretical lens. These were concerned with the ability of a perspective to; work primarily with *narratives*; consider identity work on individual *and* communal levels; *connect* individual subjectivity to practices; and to be able to sufficiently *operationalise* concepts.

Whilst each perspective was helpful in doing at least *one* of these things, I was not satisfied that, used wholesale and without adaptation, they would support the type of study I was shaping. What an examination of these

perspectives *did* alert me to was the development of meaning through social activity (pragmatism), the significance of perspectives on things as guides for action (symbolic interactionism), and the way in which knowledge, being socially constituted, can then be recorded and fixed as tools for action (CHAT). Whilst I had used the material I engaged with to focus my enquiry, and to sensitise myself to certain ways of looking, I continued to consider material on the issues of narrative and identity. It was at this point which I started to read the narrative hermeneutic work of Paul Ricoeur, whose work deals with both of these topics. As I read, I became convinced that I had found a rich resource that I could draw upon.

Ricoeur's work on narrative identity was attractive to me because it was multi-faceted and provided a general model that connected lived experience and established stories, and set the self in the context of a life lived with others. I then selected and adapted Ricoeur's ideas to help me operationalise some of the ideas I had selected from his work. My understanding of the relevance of Ricoeur's work, and the ways in which I would adapt it, inspired by these other sources, emerged over time – and in time informed, and was informed by, the empirical data I collected.

Shaping questions for the study

Early development of this study therefore focused upon the ways in which narrative identity developed over time, and the relation of 'self-talk' to lived experience. My interest was philosophical, shaped by Ricoeur's work, but also had a practical focus, as I wanted to gain an insight into practices of meaning making, identifying how this occurred for individuals.

In the light of this, I developed two broad questions to frame my study. These continued to be useful for my own thinking, for participants and to others whom I explained my research throughout. These were:

- *"How do experiences turn into identity stories?"*; and,
- *"How do identity stories shape on-going practice?"*

These seemingly simple questions captured for me the idea of identity over time, narrative, transformation and connections to practice. They also reflected my conceptualisation of the topic of narrative identity, specifically, Ricoeur's (1983/1990) concept of the mimetic spiral (p.72), with phases of prefiguration, configuration and refiguration, discussed in the third chapter of this thesis.

Within the frame of these two guiding questions, I developed specific questions that would direct my enquiry. I had begun to think of my study in broadly hermeneutic terms, and as having an emergent and flexible (Robson, 2011) methodology, so the role for these questions was to further focus my enquiry. However, I was aware that my understanding of the questions, my conceptualisation of the subject, and insights from data would emerge over time, and they would in turn further refine and develop these questions. These specific questions were developed in relation to Sure Start Children's Centre leaders, and were:

- *What does 'professional identity' mean to these participants; what status and forms does it take?*
- *(How) has narrative identity developed over time for these participants?*
- *If narrative identity is positioned as a project undertaken by participants, what is the relationship between doing and talking in that project?*
- *Are there identifiable functions, processes or mechanisms that affect the enactment of narrative identity in this study?*

Terminology

In drawing on sources from diverse disciplines, terminology became an issue for this study. Ricoeur's work alone extensively drew upon multiple sources and traditions in philosophy, social theory, theory of language and speech, literary theory and others. Writing on the topics of narrative and identity also used varied terminology. Further, discussion of practices involved terminology from ethnomethodology or sociology. I found myself navigating between and across disciplinary boundaries, which had both benefits and disadvantages. Making connections between terminological and disciplinary

'languages' demanded clarity about what was being described, and made me aware of possible ambiguities in my thinking. I had to resolve, as my study progressed, multiple ways of describing the same thing. One key example was the various labels I applied to established identity narratives, which I identified at different times as "narrative accounts", "narrative themes", "representational talk" and "presentation of self". However, after much thought I chose to use the phrase 'self-talk' as will be seen later in this thesis. Consequently, a glossary of key terms and meanings employed throughout this thesis; both mine and those of others, is provided following the appendices.

Structure of the thesis

The chapter following this introduction is a review of literature relevant to the study. There, I offer a more specific consideration of the sense-making and identity work practices of individuals, including leaders in early years settings such as Sure Start Children's Centres. In moving from the topic of discourse in early years policy through to these sense-making practices, I address work on the sort of context in which leaders seek to define themselves. I identify the need for leaders in integrated early years services to construct their professional selves, as they do not have the defining influence of a single profession or type of setting and in addition the concept of career is ambiguous and fluid. I identify work on the contribution of organisational, disciplinary, pedagogic and phenomenological bodies of literature to the questions set out in this chapter. Through this material, I identify narrative identity as a practical response to an uncertain and dynamic professional context; further, identity work is defined as a social project that is constructed and sustained through narrative practices. Finally, the next chapter argues that a theoretical framework is required which addresses identity as a narrative product and activity, develops over time, has both fixed and dynamic characteristics and is connected to participants social practices and lifeworlds (Husserl, 1954/1970; Heidegger, 1927/2010).

The third chapter develops a theoretical framework for the thesis, drawing on Ricoeur's work in a pragmatic and heuristic way. I present the chapter as an interpretive resource for the study, not a comprehensive statement of Ricoeur's work on identity. I present Ricoeur's work as an important adaptation of both phenomenology and hermeneutics, which draws on resources from semantics, language and action theory. I also indicate how Ricoeur's consideration of time, poetics and mimesis helps provide specific resources for this thesis. The chapter shows how specific ideas offered by Ricoeur on the subject of narrative identity contribute to a notion of it as something which is non-foundational, dynamic, social, and multi-modal. The focal point of this chapter is my adaptation and re-purposing of Ricoeur's (1983/1990, 1990/1994) mimetic arc or spiral which connects lived experience (mimesis₁), ordering and structuring of narrative (mimesis₂) and reception or reapplication of those narratives back into action (mimesis₃).

Following the fourth chapter, the theoretical framework for the thesis, presents my methodology, ethical considerations and sampling. I intended the methodology to be what I term 'co-constructive', reflexive and progressive. In using these terms, I emphasise work *together* with study participants in a hermeneutic process, and focus on identifying and reflecting upon identity narratives. Further, I see my methodology as progressive in that the work with participants, over time, builds a detailed picture of sense-making and identity practices. I also discuss how analysis, or interpretive work, is built into all phases of the study, both with participants and in my own work and how I have attended to the need to be reflexive. Additionally, I show how my methodology is consistent with the theoretical frame I have set out in reflecting narrative, hermeneutic and social constructionist concerns. In doing this, I address what type of talk I established with participants, and how I employ visual elements in my work. As the chapter progresses, I move from the broader methodology of the study to specific methods, and discuss my use of interpretive artefacts as cartoons, maps and table top artefacts. These artefacts are positioned as part of the interpretive process, not the final 'result' of it, and I discuss the relationships between the coding of narrative data, the creation of artefacts and the on-going use of these

artefacts in research work with participants. Through all of this activity, I draw attention to the rich process that resulted in the development of interpretive memos as texts.

I next turn to the presentation and discussion of findings from the study, in my fifth chapter, which I identify as emerging over time from the interpretive process I have developed outlined in the previous chapter. Firstly, in the chapter I address what counts as narrative, relating the concept of smaller 'narrative elements' with what I term 'big stories'. I emphasise the value of these smaller units of meaning, so resisting the idea that narrative identity is only about 'big stories'. I begin the fifth chapter by introducing participants and summarising their various narratives about showing and telling identity. I do this to provide important context for discussion of the details that follow, and to present my understanding of the basic structure, features and themes as I understand them for each participant. Discussion of individual participants' narratives is then followed by a general discussion within the four thematic sections of the chapter.

The four themes of the findings and discussion chapter all relate to the general 'framing' questions and the specific questions I have set out for this study, and to each other. The first theme in the chapter, entitled "Talking, doing and being" contextualises the following ones, and draws attention to the way in which Ricoeur's concept of the mimetic spiral relates to the general movement and relationships of narrative data. In this section, I draw attention to the evolutionary nature of the narrative self, and the mutually constitutive relationship of the narrative self and the acting subject. Building on this, the second theme entitled "Coherence and structure in narrative identity" in the chapter considers connections within participants' narrative data generally, within self-talk, and also connections between self-talk and practice-talk categories, reflecting my questions about how narrative identity and practices relate. In this section, I consider the significance of pivotal narrative themes to participants' life-projects (Ricoeur, 1960/1987, p.71; 1990/1994, p.158) and associated mimetic activity. Additionally, connections are seen as patterns of sedimented meaning, and through the metaphor of a heuristic map, navigated by participants. The third theme of the chapter,

titled “Narrative identity as an ecosystem” draws attention to different types of narrative that achieve different functions around narrative identity.

Following this, the fourth theme of the chapter, titled “Social mechanisms of for the narrative self”, draws attention to the way in which participants self-talk dynamically responds to opportunities for expansion or adapts when structured or constricted. Additionally, I discuss the way in which narrative identity is a social undertaking, not only responding to ‘the other’, but being something established by others through practical activities such as judging and Ricoeurian ideas of reputation and recognition.

The thesis concludes with the sixth chapter, where I consider ways in which my thesis has built upon and deviated from the current body of knowledge on the topic. I highlight key insights generated by the study, and return to the research questions posed in this chapter to consider the ways in which I respond to them through the thesis as a whole. Additionally, I consider limitations of the study and potential directions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter forms another part of my journey to find and make sense of narrative identity for the early years leader, if indeed it can be 'found'. However, this is not a dispassionate, objective journey through all potential literature that could relate to narrative identity and leadership in the early years. In terms familiar to philosophers such as Martin Heidegger (1927/2010), Hans-Georg Gadamer (1960/2013) and Paul Ricoeur (1981, 1983/1990, 1990/1994), it results from my hermeneutic encounters, or conversations, with disparate discourses found in a range of relevant disciplines, which are utilised as a resource. As far as the metaphor of a journey can apply, it is a journey with a purpose, which is to address the questions about narrative identity I set out in the previous chapter. Material discussed in each of the sections that follow is characterised by the idea of shifting contextual boundaries, where definitions and topics are not static but are traced across different bodies of literature and ways of thinking. Consequently, I make connections across diverse sources and traditions. Additionally, I emphasise that this chapter is not an exhaustive review of all literature, but it is a summary and discussion of key themes and sources that inform this thesis.

To contextualise the chapter, I begin with a brief consideration of the topic of identity itself as presented across many different types of discipline and subject. In this introduction to the subject, I identify a general movement away from stable, unproblematic definitions and descriptions of the 'self' towards dynamic and fragile ones, thus providing a context for 'identity work'. I then add practical context to this conceptual context for this thesis by examining the story of Sure Start itself. Here, I indicate the early intention and scale of Sure Start as a cross government policy project, and identify the way in which the project and those working in it were subject to certain sorts of critique. Additionally, I trace the movement from Sure Start as early policy

experiment to a mainstream service that would rapidly be eroded in terms of political support and resources.

From this point, I examine the potential of 'official' guidance and standards directed to leaders in Sure Start to speak to my research questions. Here, my assessment is that whilst the complexity of the sector is acknowledged and some signposts can be found, any sense of narrative identity or identity work on the part of the Children's Centre leader is drowned out by prescriptive and conforming nature of the material I review. Consequently, the early years practitioner is identified as a technician (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2013) and gendered assumptions about the nature of their work are left unexamined in much of this literature (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Fletcher, 2004; Osgood, 2006).

I then turn to literature that deals with the organisation as I seek to inform my questions about narrative identity and identity work. The discipline of sociology provides some context for my questions about individuals and organisations here, and I identify work that sets socially constructed and dynamic workplaces as inter-active contexts for professional identity. Specifically, I examine postmodern (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000) treatments of the organisation-as-context, and consider contemporary theories that deal with action in the workplace. In reviewing this body of literature, the significance of organisation as active context for individual action is considered.

In moving from the context for narrative professional identity to its activities, I then review literature dealing with disciplinary, pedagogic and phenomenological themes. Here, literature begins to relate narrative and practices in helpful ways, but I argue that the explanatory power of this material is limited, given the vague nature of some of this material or the assumptions it makes in relation to the metaphor of learning. Finally, I note the way some phenomenological work identifies broad concepts that inform this study, but also how its questions of *appearance* fail to inform questions of *practice* for this thesis.

As the chapter progresses, I identify feminist influenced literature which supports my critical engagement with identity practices in this study. I identify the benefits of a feminist engagement with “post-heroic” (Fletcher, 2004) leadership and the often unchallenged ontologies of leadership as white, male and middle aged. Further I consider influences of a gendered concept of care in the early years. Feminist approaches to this subject focus on the ways in which gendered practices and identities are performed or forced upon individuals. A feminist view, then, directs my own enquiry of how identity is established, considering issues of ethics, relationships and activism.

In the final section of this chapter, I look at material that has the potential to address feminist concerns with the need to examine how identity work is defined and established, with a focus on narrative practices. Consequently, I argue the case for an adaptation of narrative hermeneutic philosophy that attends to the practical and ethical concerns of feminism and ethnomethodology.

Introducing ‘Identity’

The large and diverse body of literature on the topic of *identity*, and *professional identity* is a context for what follows in this chapter. I begin by identifying particular concerns and themes relevant to this study, moving from general work on identity to more specific texts which define the concerns for the contemporary study of professional identity.

The topic of identity is described as a contemporary western trouble by Stephanie Lawler (2008, p.1), and a “fundamental sociological problem” by Antony Giddens (1991, p.1). As Lawler (2008) argues, ‘identity’ is a term that resists singular definition (p.2), but associates with ideas of categorisation and identification, sameness and difference. Lawler (2008) also argues that an individual may have multiple identities, but may also be classified in ways that are exclusive, expressed in binaries such as black/white or homosexual/heterosexual (p.3).

How 'identity' is conceptualised, described and investigated varies according to the location of the discussion along theoretical, discipline and practical lines. In other words, as Anthony Elliott (2001) argues, being located within the discourses of modernism, post-structuralism, the arts, business, or being 'applied' changes the ways in which 'identity' is defined, placing more or less emphasis on issues such as agency, structure, the internal symbolic world, politics and culture, gender and sexuality, language and discourse, ethnicity and so on (Ibid. pp.1-17). There are many schools of thought on the topic of identity across a vast body of literature, and each provides its own way of defining, determining and explaining what identity and selfhood is, and how it operates.

In broad terms, the development material on identity and selfhood can be plotted from points including the masks and speeches of Greco-Roman society through the stoic philosophy of individual ethics, the inner orientation of Augustine, the mind-body dualism of Descartes, the inferred and reasoning self of Kant, the becoming and dialectical self of Hegel, the social and symbolic self of G.H. Mead, to the disestablishment of self initiated by Nietzsche as discussed by Ian Burkitt (2008, pp.5-15), Charles Taylor (1989), Jerrold Seigel (2005), James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium (2000, p.4). Amongst other things, this 'direction' of travel reflects the emergence of philosophical thought, the changing status and power of religion, and the emergence of the nation state and capitalism (Burkitt, 2008, p.15).

Modern notions of identity, emphasising the importance of social factors, have doubtless been built on the development of sociology. From the foundations of Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim and Max Weber, sociology explored identity using the question "who are we?". This approach to enquiry as Burkitt (2008) stated, explored the material basis for social relations (Marx); the basis for social solidarity and inter-dependence (Durkheim) and the attainment of selfhood in western bureaucratic capitalism (Weber) (Ibid. pp.15-22). Specifically, authors such as George Herbert Mead and latterly symbolic interactionists including and influenced by Herbert Blumer (1969/1992) have had a profound influence on sociological thought regarding

the topics of identity and socialisation. Mead (1934/1967) focused attention on the symbolic emergence of meaning in the social process, arguing that;

“The self is something which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his relation to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process. (Ibid. p.135)

Mead further argued that;

“It is the characteristic of the self as an object to itself that I want to bring out. This characteristic is represented in the word “self,” which is a reflexive, and indicates that which can be both subject and object.” (Ibid. pp.136-137)

Mead’s revolutionary study of the self as a unique kind of object asked “How can an individual get outside himself (experientially) in such a way as to become an object to himself?” (Ibid. p.138). He developed an innovative response, arguing that self was to be constituted in the social process itself.

As Filipe Carreira da Silva (2007) argues;

“Reflectivity, according to Mead, has two different action levels: the subjective, where the self sees itself as an object, and the intersubjective, where the self takes the attitude of the communication partner. In Mead’s philosophy the intersubjective model of reflectivity takes clear precedence, as the subjective is defined in dialogical terms” (pp.30-31)

Blumer’s (1969/1992) work claimed to build on the foundations of Mead and in so doing was one example of a turn towards subjectivity and associated ethnographic and narrative research into the subject of identity, particularly in ‘unusual’ or ‘different’ situations. This sort of attention to subjectivity, personal accounts and biography reflected the general turn towards the theme of the narrative self in modern literature (McAdams, 1997; Taylor, 1989).

Modern literature on the narrative self, built on this interest in personal accounts and biography reflects concerns around understanding and meaning making in changing and uncertain conditions. Within the great variety of narrative studies identified by Ken Plummer (2001) are to be found both academic and popular ‘confessional’ literature, photographic or object

based narratives and video diaries. In addition, Plummer (1995) highlights narratives of sex and sexuality. Here, authors cover a range of topics; for example, Douglas Ezzy (1998) analyses living with HIV/AIDS; David A. Snow and Leon Anderson (1987) discuss homelessness; Máiréad Nic Craith (2012) addresses language and culture and Amia Lieblich and Ruthellen Josselson (1994) present work on gender and identity. As noted, sociological movements such as symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969/1992) supported the investigation of unusual and problematic personal and group narratives from the 1970's in the quest to understand from the perspective of the narrator as exemplified by Robert Dingwall (2001), Michael L. Schwalbe (1983) and Kathy Charmaz (2008). Such work as offered by Tony J. Watson (2009) identifies the influence of the "linguistic" turn and "post-structuralist thinking" on the narrative self, with the implication that "... 'texts', narratives amongst them, bring into being or 'constitute' everything from identities to organizations themselves" (p.248), underlining their significance in the social sciences and moving beyond unproblematic study of accounts or biography. Of particular relevance to this thesis is the rise of narrative studies which have *organisation* and *profession* as context; within this field, writers such as Keith Richards (2006) utilise methodologies such as conversation analysis to explore professional identity as Barbara Czarniawska and Pasquale Gagliardi (2003) present work on the connection between the activities of organising and narrating. This body of work is returned to in more depth later.

Modern work on this theme of the narrative self includes that by Jerome Bruner (2003) who makes the grand claim that "A self is probably the most impressive work of art we ever produce, surely the most intricate." (p.167). Bruner (2004) identifies broadly with a constructivist position that suggests that "... "world making" is the principle function of mind" (p.691). In other words, narrative is presented as the medium in which humans describe their lives. Bruner (Ibid.) identifies a practical, reciprocal relationship between lived experience and narrative, stating that "Narrative imitates life, life imitates narrative" (Ibid. p.692). Further, Bruner (2004) recognises the situated and interactive basis for narrative selfhood, stating that "not just any

autobiography will do”, and that “One imposes criteria of rightness on the self-report of a life just as one imposes them on the account of a football game or the report of an event in nature” (Ibid. p.693). In his discussion of criteria for judging narratives, Bruner highlights instability, but his life's work argues for the role played by narrative in the personal nature of learning and cognitive development, further, Bruner (1991) argues that self-narrative must be seen to be influenced by a social and cultural context, resonating with the work of Charles Taylor (1989) and Paul Ricoeur (Ricoeur, 1981; 1983/1990, 1990/1994), who have established philosophical foundations for considering the narrative self in the latter part of the twenty first century and are particularly significant to this thesis.

Contemporary thinking on identity has moved away from what Anthony Elliott (2001) identifies as the "notion of the rational individual subject" (p.10) and has been shaped in addition to sociology by the resources of psychoanalysis, feminism and post-structuralism. This has emphasised in different ways the contingent, constructed, politicised and arguably, illusionary understandings of identity. James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium (2000) specifically relate the narrative self to a *postmodern* context. They share Paul du Gay's (2007) view that “the self has fallen upon hard times” (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000, p.3). Recognising tensions between various positions, Holstein and Gubrium (2000) suggest that these tensions include “Hopefulness versus disintegration; presence versus imagery; narrative inventiveness versus discipline.” but argue that narrative can reconcile these and provide “endless possibilities” for understanding the self (p.173). Holstein and Gubrium's (2000) ‘solution’ to the destabilising challenge of postmodernism, represented by the terms *disintegration*, *imagery* and *discipline*, is to work with an ethnomethodologically influenced “conception of a practical, interactionality called identity. This narrative highlights discursive practice as the means through which the self is constructed.” (p.89).

In considering postmodern literature on identity, Holstein and Gubrium (2000, p.56) cite Pauline M. Rosenau's (1992, p.14) categorisation of postmodern

writing on identity into “sceptical” or “affirmative”, As Holstein and Gubrium (2000) describe it, the former expressing doubt about ‘reality’ of the self:

“...in this “reality” the self is altogether removed from its traditional moorings as the central agent of experience to become the mere shadow of what it was. For scepticals, postmodern connotes a world in which there is nothing-no things at all in the traditional sense of a universe of objects separate and distinct from their representation.” (p.57)

Although Rosenau (1992, p.14) accepts some aspects of scepticism, he presents an ‘affirmative’ postmodern position regarding identity which has some sympathy with approach of my study. As Holstein and Gubrium (2000) describe it, Rosenau works with transience and diversity in the process of the self, arguing that;

“...[this is] a more hopeful, optimistic view of the post-modern age...the generally optimistic affirmatives are orientated towards process. They are either open to positive political action (struggle and resistance) or content with the recognition of visionary, celebratory personal nondogmatic projects...Most affirmatives seek a philosophical and ontological intellectual practice that is nondogmatic, tentative and nonideological.” (pp.15-16)

Holstein and Gubrium (2000, p.58) cite the example of Kenneth Gergen (1991) as an affirmative postmodernist, whose work refers to the “multiplicity of incoherent and unrelated languages of the self” (Gergen 1991, p.6). Further, Holstein and Gubrium (2000) argue that Gergen recognises the implications of late, or post, modernity and conclude that;

“There is no essential, foundational understanding, only a plethora of possibilities for what can be. As such, selves are in continuous construction, never completed, never fully coherent, never completely centred securely in experience” (p.60).

Importantly, Gergen (1991) remains ‘affirmative’ regarding the post (or late) modern context in which he argues “selves and relationships stand to be enriched rather than impoverished” (p.226), suggesting that a non-foundational approach to identity is compatible with the questions about development and agency discussed in this thesis, which I identify as affirmative. Further, work by authors such as Norman K. Denzin (1989,1997; 2014) demonstrate that this non-foundational but affirmative position can be

applied credibly to the study of life through an investigation of narrative and ethnographic selfhood.

It would be too simple to suggest that a non-foundational, affirmative view of identity is unproblematic, or requires no qualification. If anything, recognition that identity is fluid and enacted through social processes opens it up as a complex and problematic area of study. Whilst addressing his own work to a vision of “late modern” society, Antony Giddens (1991) articulates some of the complexities for identity that addresses the idea of uncertainty. Giddens (1991) emphasises the need to understand the influence of doubt on personal identity and selfhood, where “all knowledge takes the form of hypothesis” and risk, which “becomes fundamental to the way both lay actors and technical specialists organise the social world” (p.3). These factors present the self as something which must be a “reflexively organised endeavour” (Ibid. p.5), which “consists of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives” (Ibid. p.5), responding to changing and uncertain conditions; requiring revision, positioning and occupation. Through a “late modern” lens Giddens identifies the implications of establishing a non-foundational view of identity by establishing it as a project which requires reflexivity and maintenance;

“In the reflexive project of the self, the narrative of self-identity is inherently fragile. The task of forging a distinct identity may be able to deliver distinct psychological gains, but it is clearly also a burden. A self-identity has to be created and more or less continually reordered against the backdrop of shifting experiences of day-to-day life and the fragmenting tendencies of modern institutions.” (Ibid. p.186)

Giddens’ focus on institutional context connects with my discussion of professional identity, although he does not provide specific conceptual or methodological detail to support ways to investigate the questions of this thesis.

Whilst I go on to consider organisational literature as a specific section of this chapter, I note here that literature on ‘professional identity’ acts as a sub-category of literature on identity in general. Given its status as an overarching term, authors such as Amy B. M. Tsui (2007) argue that the concept of *professional identity* is, like the term *identity*, characterised by its

“multidimensionality or multifaceted nature” (p.657). For example, professional identity may be defined in psychological terms, where Holly S. Slay and Delmonize A. Smith (2011) suggest, “Professional identity is defined as one’s professional self-concept based on attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences” (p.85). However, I shall go on to show how literature on professional identity, as a sub set of the wider body contemporary work on identity, is increasingly moving towards definitions that reflect the view that identity is something fluid and enacted.

Within this opening statement on identity, I have highlighted issues and themes that will be examined in more depth shortly. So far, I am able to identify a concern with identity as something that changes over time, and that is enacted and social. I identify with a view of identity that is neither transcendent ego nor illusion; but look for a way to articulate an identity, through narrative, which can be structured and sedimented and also be, as I have said, something fluid, enacted and social.

With this focus and criteria in mind, I now go on to examine a necessarily diverse set of bodies of writing which have emerged as significant for my thesis. Their selection reflects my own journey of reading and sorting as I have sought to make sense of the questions I have previously set out.

Leading in Sure Start Children’s Centres

The story of leaders within Sure Start Children’s Centres – the subject of this thesis - is also partly the story of Sure Start itself. The phrase ‘sure start’ in English social policy terms identifies an initiative providing integrated care and education services for young children and their families within communities. It is also identified as a policy response from the UK government to contemporary ‘problems’ related to early childhood. As such, it is a contested site for professional practice, with arguments over what it has become and what it ‘should’ do. Sure Start continues to have to justify its existence and worth alongside traditional and changing forms of state intervention. Here I chart the development and characteristics of Sure Start

in critical literature creating a narrative context around leading and managing.

In April 2013, there were approximately 3,116 Sure Start Children's Centres in England (4Children, October 2013), although the climate of financial austerity for the public services and local authorities allocated public funding by HM Treasury was reported by the Guardian newspaper (Butler, Monday 28th January, 2013) as having an increase in the number of these centres closing. Sure Start Children's Centres are typically defined in relation to their intended outcome;

“Sure Start children's centres improve outcomes for young children and their families and reduce inequalities, particularly for those families in greatest need of support.” (Department for Education, 2013, p.6)

A definition of Sure Start Children's Centres is also provided by the executive agency responsible at the time of writing for leadership development in the sector; the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL). They define Sure Start Children's Centres as;

“...centres providing integrated services for young children and their families and which bring different support agencies together to offer a range of services to meet the needs of parents, families and children from pregnancy through to Reception in primary school (and in some cases offering family support beyond age five)” (Sharp, et al., 2012)

Consequently, at the time of writing, the UK Government allocates them a 'core purpose':

“The core purpose of children's centres is to improve outcomes for young children and their families and reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers in:

- child development and school readiness;
- parenting aspirations and parenting skills; and
- child and family health and life chances.”

(Department for Education, 2013, p.7)

A further element of definition is around organisational models for Sure Start Children's Centres. NCTL states that these include;

- “a cluster of children’s centres working together on strategic goals;
- a cluster model with a locality manager who is directly responsible to the local authority;
- a hub-and-spoke model, whereby the leader of a hub centre is responsible for the work of satellite or ‘spoke’ centres”

(Sharp et al., 2012)

Another element having an impact upon definitions of the work of Sure Start Children’s Centres is the contemporary legislative basis that can be found in the Children and Adoption Act 2006. This requires that local authorities improve the well being of children and reduce inequalities between them, ensure that early childhood services are delivered in an “integrated manner”, work together with health and Job Centre Plus services to deliver these aims, and to address issues of sufficient provision in this context (Children and Adoption Act 2006). In addition, statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) regarding the establishment of Sure Start Children’s Centres is relevant in that it defines “early childhood services” as:

- “early years provision (early education and childcare);
- social services functions of the local authority relating to young children, parents and prospective parents;
- health services relating to young children, parents and prospective parents;
- training and employment services to assist parents or prospective parents; and
- information and advice services for parents and prospective parents.”

(Department for Education, 2013)

This complex set of definitions, reflecting different points of view (legislative, spatial, professional) is suggestive of the complexity of tensions around these centres, and sets some context for the consideration of leadership roles in Sure Start, as a formal aspect of professional identity.

Official definitions, however, reveal little about Sure Start Children’s Centres as discursive contexts for professional practice and identity. Consequently, the practical implementation and development of this initiative becomes an important topic. Sure Start can, in the broadest context for this study, be

located in the ambiguous and contested ideological discourses of the modern social democracy discussed by authors such as Olaf Cramme and Patrick Diamond (2012). Authors such as Howard Richards and Joanna Swagner (2008) examining the dilemmas of social democracies highlight a fundamental tension between goals of promoting a society in which poverty is reduced and democratic and just aims are fulfilled and a society based on a capitalist economy, which arguably undermines activities of co-operation and sharing (pp.2-3). Young children are potentially subjects to be protected, nurtured and educated *and* potential economic subjects, part of the unit of the family. Again this reveals tensions around early childhood.

As Ruth Lister (2004) and Janet Newman and Bob McKee (2005) argue, the state in the modern social democracy is positioned to intervene in social issues, with a role for government in “social investment” (ibid, p.659). This is intended to prevent unwelcome social and associated economic cost. In relation to professional practice and identity, this investment is delivered by a government who position themselves as “modernised”. This in turn encourages a more proactive and entrepreneurial response by local authorities reframed, as Neil Barnett (2011) states, as “place shapers” (p.275), although the reality for local authorities includes being responsible for things such as the effects of policies which are outside of their control, as Martin Laffin (2008) argues. With regard to children’s services generally, Nick Frost and Mike Stein (2009) discuss the effects of modernisation in “the move towards integrated, multi-professional working and the increasing emphasis on improving outcomes for children and young people” (p.315) that represent the “two most significant shifts in contemporary child welfare” (Ibid. p.315). In the face of this, children’s services organisations have had to become “flexible, more responsive, more accountable and more efficient” (Ibid.). The broad context for Sure Start, and the identity of its leaders, is then set in part by local government and national government social investment and modernisation agendas, arguably producing a confused discourse around delivering results and local innovation. This challenge is compounded by the call to ‘join up’ demanded by central government policy

agendas, as discussed by authors such as James Downe and Steve Martin (2006, p.465).

As the site of complex policy challenges and multiple social issues (such as childcare, parenting, child health, educational attainment) early childhood has been identified as a prime subject for government policy, evidenced in recent policy and legislation on those subjects. Early Years services are also subject to an economic discourse with literature such as that by Sandy Farquhar (2010) and Ruth Lister (2003, 2006) identifying the social cost of poor educational attainment, child health, family dysfunction and focusing on government agendas in childcare relating to employability, particularly for mothers. In this context, Gunilla Dahlberg and Peter Moss (2005) present a sobering picture of “the prospect of preschools being sites for producing predefined outcomes, mainly through the application of technical practices to the efficient governing of children” (p.2). In other words childhood, and early childhood professions are positioned as subjects of a dominant neo-liberal (market driven, individualistic, entrepreneurial) discourse, represented by the authors by the idea of technical (as opposed to ethical) practice recognised by authors such as Gillian Pugh and Bernadette Duffy (2013) as having low status. Further, Dahlberg and Moss (2005) identify the task set for these services by Government as simply “seeking the best methods and procedures for delivering predetermined outcomes” (p.2). Thus early childhood, and the identity of leaders of early childhood services such as Sure Start are shaped by the discourses of social democracy, the welfare state and social investment.

The stories of Sure Start

Naomi Eisenstadt, in her own partly autobiographical account of the development of Sure Start, says the ‘story’ of Sure Start;

“...starts with tremendous hope, has a middle period of doubt and worry, and ends with optimism for the future while acknowledging the struggles and achievements along the way” (Eisenstadt, 2011, p.3).

Eisenstadt's account summarises, from her personal perspective, the cross-governmental effort to better understand, co-ordinate and fund services for young children and their families. She describes the emergence of contemporary services, from early HM Treasury review stages, new approaches to evaluation of services and charts the impact of new government priorities around child poverty and lone parents that changed the original conception of Sure Start as holistic area based initiatives. Eisenstadt recognises the impact of the overarching "Every Child Matters" agenda, which represented a focus on improving *shared* outcomes for children and young people by focusing on early intervention, integration and workforce reform (HM Treasury, 2003). Finally, she discusses the move of responsibility for Sure Start local programmes to local authorities (Department for Education and Skills, 2006a) in the establishment of Sure Start Children's Centres and the implementation of the ten year strategy for childcare (HM Treasury, 2004). Eisenstadt was responsible for Sure Start, then all early years policy in the UK from 1999 to 2006 so her account can be considered significant.

This overview records the rapid development of a new policy approach and way of working with young children and their families in England. Professionals working in Sure Start have implemented, to a great degree, the ambitions of the 1998 spending review that began its development. At that time, the Treasury recorded;

"Thirteen government departments have taken part in a review of provision for young children, looking in particular at what more could be done to give young children a better start in life. Many government departments have some responsibility for children, but spending on young children is fragmented and often uncoordinated. The Review found that although spending on young children costs the UK over £15 billion a year, it is not providing the support needed by some of the most disadvantaged young children and their families." (H.M. Treasury, 1998, Ch. 21)

This significant move onto the policy stage for early childhood was cemented by the Treasury led spending review. This led to the creation of Sure Start. What this meant was that the 'early years' increasingly became an object of political and professional attention. Looking back at its initiation, Norman

Glass, the Treasury lead for the work that led to Sure Start noted that at the time;

“the period between birth and age four was one that was largely free of public policy measures at a national level, except in the case of the minority of families and children who came into contact with the personal social services for various reasons.” (Glass, 2006, p.52)

Despite the previous lack of formal policy attention, a broader set of discourses had begun to develop in the 1990's. Specifically, Jayne Osgood (2009) discusses the “deficit” discourse regarding the childcare workforce in documents such as *Meeting the childcare challenge: The national childcare strategy* (Department for Education and Employment, 1998) where those working with children are deemed to be of need of reform.

This deficit model was reflected in the development of Sure Start. In July 1998, 250 Sure Start Local Programmes were announced in the “most deprived” neighbourhoods of England (Glass, 2006, p.52). The central government Sure Start Unit commissioned a national evaluation of Sure Start (NESS). Programmes were identified as being placed in areas with “the worst deprivation in England” (Department for Education and Skills, 2003b), with corresponding challenges in relation to unemployment, crime, child health, educational attainment and so on (Ibid. ii,iii). By 2005, a qualitative report from the NESS on the implementation of Sure Start Local Programmes drew on interviews with managers and senior staff noting “resourceful” and “enthusiastic” staff (Melhuish, Belsky, & Leyland, 2005, p.6) and “multi faceted and challenging” leadership roles (Ibid. p.7). New approaches to addressing issues ensured, as the NESS stated, “professionals have to re-interpret their professional role when working in multi-professional teams” (Ibid. p.8). The same NESS report of 2005 noted that “...‘being a professional’ will not, in the eyes of parents, automatically guarantee success in a Sure Start role” (Ibid. p.11), hinting at new demands upon professional practice and identity for those in Sure Start that I return to later.

The opportunity to innovate and focus on supporting families represented by Sure Start was broadly welcomed. Journalist Polly Toynbee wrote a

commentary titled "Labour's plan to eradicate poverty is under way" in the summer of 1999, which presented the initiative as "the government's best kept secret" (Toynbee, July 20th, 1999). Some professional politics also came into play, reflected particularly in health orientated practice publications, featuring headlines such as "Sure Start ignores Health Visitors" (Anon. Nursing Standard, April 7th-13th, 1999). This could be seen as reflecting a view that, as Jay Belsky, Jacqueline Barnes and Edward Melhuish (2007) argued;

"Many working with young children and families felt that they had been without much support for years, but now that resources were flowing from central government, other interested parties were emerging to lay claim to them" (p.100)

However, as was my experience, those working together in the new programmes did so in a unique context, relatively free from prescription and political control, as Jane Lewis, Johnathan Roberts and Cathy Finnegan (2011) stated;

"Reporting directly to central government's Sure Start Unit, the Sure Start local programmes (SSLPs) enjoyed considerable autonomy and tended to be particularly responsive to local parents." (p.595)

However, with relative autonomy came the challenge of configuring and establishing new services and new professional relationships. Mog Ball, writing as a member of the NESS team in their 2007 book, reflected that;

"The reconfiguration of services central to the vision of SSLPs had implications for a wide range of workers...notably, however, there was no training to prepare them for the scale of the changes they would experience." (Ball, in Belsky, Barnes & Melhuish (Eds.), 2007, p.103)

Training may have been scarce, but in typical New Labour style, guidance for those leading and working within Sure Start on the planning and implementation, and eventually integrated working with children and families was voluminous, (Ball, July 2002; Department for Education and Employment, 1999, 2000; Department for Education and Skills, 2003a, 2006a, 2006b). The guidance material reflected the ambitious nature of the programme, and addressed practical issues, but could not anticipate what

might happen as there was no precedent for this development. As Norman Glass indicated;

“...this was an entirely new programme for a sector that had little or no experience of running major publicly funded programmes, let alone those based on community development principles, involving local parents in the regeneration of their areas. There was a very small cadre of managers with this sort of experience, and little or no history of professionals trained or experienced to work across professional boundaries in order to deliver child-centred care.” (Glass, 2006, p.54)

Creating new programmes and working practices in Sure Start reflected an opportunity to put into practice a style of professional practice focusing on dialogue, as Belsky, Barnes et al (2007) stated;

“The new approach to professional working and engaging parents across all professional disciplines and levels placed a premium on openness, accessibility, informality, not being judgemental, and on listening, respecting and learning from parents’ own experiences.” (p. 107)

The overall reception of Sure Start was very positive, however, it would be incorrect to paint a picture of professional practice in Sure Start Local Programmes as ideal and problem free. A review of National Evaluation material highlights issues regarding boundaries, accountability, roles, ‘over-management’, skill gaps, communication and so on (Department for Education and Skills, 2005b). In addition, in the years following the implementation of the first waves of Sure Start Local Programmes, in some areas gaps appeared between their focus and the broader policy focus of government. The effect was that, as Lewis (2011) said;

“Sure Start’s ethos and practice became increasingly out of step with government policy in regard to childcare. The emphasis on making provision for integrated childcare and education, linked to supporting parents into work, was very different from the relatively minor part accorded childcare in Sure Start local programmes, and reflected the way in which government’s thinking on childcare in relation to social exclusion had developed.” (p.78)

An additional problematic discourse around its’ *effectiveness* was emerging, brought to a head in the reaction to the publication of early findings from the National Evaluation of Sure Start which highlighted “limited evidence” (Department for Education and Skills, 2005a, p.6) of impact; family

functioning improving by a “modest amount” (Ibid. p.7) and mixed direct results for children themselves, including some negative effects for severely disadvantaged children. Despite the fact that the authors note that “the findings of this report represent, at best, *early* indications of whether SSLPs *might* be affecting the well-being of children and families” (Ibid. p.6, italics original), popular and political reaction was marked. Press coverage was summarised in the early years professional press as “almost unremittingly negative” (Vevers, Nursery World, 15th December 2005). The government response came in the form of new practice guidance for what were now called Sure Start Children’s Centres (Department for Education and Skills, 2005b) which emphasised that “We are moving from a range of local initiatives to a mainstream service” (p.1) and warned “the study has findings which we cannot afford to ignore” (Ibid. p.2), placing emphasis on consistency of service and evidence based practice (Ibid. p.3), monitoring and record keeping (Ibid, p.4), leadership of multi-agency working (Ibid. p.11), partnership working and facilitation of opportunities to “cooperate, discuss and make joint decisions” (Ibid. p.12). Eisenstadt (2011) notes;

“For some time during this period, Sure Start fell out of favour. Press reports about the loss of local control along with disappointing evaluation results began to tarnish the once shining brand. Oddly, the two stories argued diametrically opposing positions; loss of local control was mourned as death of the programme, but the evaluation results pushed for considerably more control from the centre.” (p.88)

The idea that the ‘story’ of Sure Start (and possibly the story of those working in it) holds things in tension is carried through in other literature. It was both new and innovative *and* contested and under pressure. Peter Moss (2004) indicates that as an intervention, Sure Start contained contradictory narratives;

“If Sure Start can be located in a tradition of early intervention, in another respect it is a child of its time in the way it combines decentralization and local participation with new forms of disciplinary control. Emphasis is placed on programmes being community driven, the involvement of parents and other carers and professionals listening to local people. Yet, at the same time, the programme is embedded in the strongly normative discourse of child development (which, despite 20 years of critique, continues to be treated as what Foucault terms a ‘regime of truth’ (1980, p.131), both self-evident and

neutral) and in managerial systems of control epitomized by public service agreements with general and standardized targets.” (p.632)

Prior to the national evaluation the narrative of Sure Start had also contained tensions. In announcing a new focus on 250,000 childcare places, the creation of Children’s Centres (extending provision to an additional 300,000 children), an enhanced role for local authorities in Children’s Centres and extending the early education offer to three year olds, the 2002 comprehensive spending review (HM Treasury, 2002, p.60) incorporated Sure Start into the mainstream economic discourse it had created around worklessness, lone parents and school readiness. The spending review itself led to the creation of plans such as the Ten Year Strategy for Childcare (HM Treasury, 2004), which introduced wide ranging reforms announcing (amongst other things) 3,500 Children’s Centres by 2010, a requirement for daycare settings to be “professionally led” and plans for a new qualification and career structure for the early years sector (Ibid. p.1). Specifically, Jayne Osgood’s (2012) analysis of the discourse of early childhood education and care in the UK suggests within the ten year strategy “new forms of professionalism were conceived” (p.32) linked to the dominant economic discourse of the strategy. Norman Glass (2006) pointed out the stark difference between the original policy intentions of Sure Start Local Programmes and the emerging discourse of government policy they were now identified with saying, for example, that “Sure Start and the childcare strategy were never the same thing.” (p.55). In practice, guidance literature indicates the initial focus on getting Sure Start implemented and creating new professional cultures was superseded by managerial concerns about ‘take up’, ‘reach’, and evidence of impact (Lewis, 2011, pp.82-83). Jane Lewis (2011) argues;

“Children’s Centres were made part of ‘mainstream’ provision for young children in all local authorities, but it is less certain as to whether in so doing a Sure Start approach was ‘mainstreamed’. The local responsiveness that had let a thousand flowers bloom in terms of the nature and balance of the SSLPs’ service offer gave way to a more specified service offer with an emphasis on integrated childcare and education for children in conjunction with links to Jobcentre Plus for their parents, and greater control by the local authority to make sure it happened..” (p.77)

The scale of change to the early years sector at this time, and for leaders in Sure Start specifically was vast. Alongside, and connected to these economically related reforms, the Government's Every Child Matters (ECM) programme of change for children's services was being implemented, accompanied by associated legislation such as the 2004 Children Act and guidance (for example; CWDC, 2009; DCSF, 2008). The ECM programme called for a "culture change required" in children's services generally and associated "significant culture change for staff" (Department for Education and Skills, 2004, p.17), with a focus on inter-agency communication and early intervention in problems. The literature tends to overlook the fact that the implementation of ECM and its practices (as well as the implementation of Sure Start generally) depended upon what Philip Gilligan and Martin Manby (2008) described as "enthusiasm, hard work and commitment of the managers and practitioners involved" (p.177).

At the time of writing, Sure Start Children's Centres remain in an uneasy position in the middle of competing government policy objectives. Guidance to Sure Start Children's Centres (Department for Education, 2013) has been substantially revised and much wider guidance on integrated and multi-agency working in children's services is not to be found, at the time of writing, on the Department for Education webpage, where the new Secretary for Education found the Every Child Matters programme did not need "a massive bureaucratic superstructure to police it" (House of Commons, 28th July 2010) in line with the UK Conservative Party 'Big Society' rhetoric on themes identified by Louise Bamfield (2011) of flexibility and choice. In addition, staff working in Sure Start Children's Centres are subject to a public sector austerity programme, resulting in local authorities being forced to find substantial savings in budgets as a result of coalition government funding cuts (Butler, 28th January, 2013). This has resulted in radical re-structuring of local authority organisation of Sure Start Children's Centres, leading in turn to redundancies and rationalised (or watered down) services, as ring fences on financial resources have been removed and redistributed (Butler, 9th October, 2012).

More positively and also ironically, the publication of a series of high profile reports highly relevant to early years policy on subject such as Frank Field's (Field, 2010) report on poverty and life chances, Graham Allen's (January 2011) report on early intervention, Eileen Munro's (2011) report on safeguarding and Cathy Nutbrown's (2012) report on workforce qualifications provided a degree of policy impetus for Sure Start, recognised in the current policy context "Supporting Families in the Foundation Years" (Department for Education, 2011), where a clear role for Sure Start remains, although policy is directed generally to "all those who commission, lead and deliver services for mothers and fathers during pregnancy and for very young children to the age of five." (Ibid. p.6), reflecting the less central position of Sure Start Children's Centres in Government Early Years policy agenda at the time of writing. Day to day consultation, research and guidance related to 'The Foundation Years' is undertaken at the time of writing by the organisation '4Children', commissioned by the DfE is leading a strategic partner consortium named "Foundations for the Future" consisting of voluntary sector organisations which has been asked to "bring the early years and childcare sector together to improve quality, influence government policy and promote best practice." (The Children's Partnership, n.d).

Outside of this policy and academic discourse, leaders work in an uncomfortable silence. Those working in Sure Start, and the early years more generally, are poised to defend themselves in relation to a confused workforce reform agenda, an increasing focus on school readiness, pressure to evidence impact in a complex, inter-related set of social issues and the resistant narratives of 'other' professionals. I now move on to examine very limited literature within Sure Start which addresses the experiences and practices of work, although it is more prevalent than that discussing identity practices.

Positioning the Early Years leader: official and academic discourse.

The topic of 'professional identity' in the early years is both directly and indirectly addressed within literature on professional practice with young

children or on early years leadership. Some texts contain useful introductory contributions to the subject from such authors such as Linda Miller and Carrie Cable (2010) and Rory McDowall Clark and Janet Murray (2012) but much other material may be described as technical and uncritical. In many of these texts, “professional identity” is alluded to in passing, or is built upon assumptions about the nature of being a “professional” or what the term “identity” refers to. Consequently, much of this literature does not provide empirical, theoretical or critical resources for those working in the early years to address professional and leadership identity in any substantive and critical way. I present what resources do exist to inform the topic and questions of my study.

There has been little change since Daniel Muijs, Carol Aubrey, Alma Harris and Mary Briggs (2004) stated, “...research on leadership in the early years sector is limited and dominated by a relatively small number of researchers...” (p.158). Their study reviewed literature on how leadership in early childhood was reported as being practiced. The authors note that ‘early’ literature on leadership in the early years reflected “a certain hesitance to engage with concepts of leadership among professionals in the early years settings, who view themselves first and foremost as educators and child developers” (Ibid. p.158). They summarised claims and evidence regarding what sort of leadership is linked to ‘quality’ (Ibid. p.160) and described research undertaken in regard to roles of early childhood leaders, revealing the focus to be “on maintenance rather than development” (Ibid. p.161). Research about characteristics of early years leaders typically are based on leaders own ‘self-reporting’, and focus on American (Bloom, 2000) or New Zealand (Bloom, 1997) contexts rather than England, although Jillian Rodd’s research (1997) draws on an British context. Nevertheless Muijs et al (2004) typify the characteristics offered in international contexts in relevant ways to England, citing as important;

“...good relationships with staff; a commitment to meeting organizational goals; a commitment to fulfilling the roles of an early childhood professional; acknowledging others’ strengths and weaknesses; a desire to extend their professional knowledge; access to clearly defined roles and responsibilities; and responsiveness to the

needs of parents. In addition, being visionary, coordinating and motivating, and being able to make decisions were mentioned, although leaders said they did not actually exercise these activities” (Ibid. p.164)

Beyond this, Mujis et al (2004) focus on the lack of leadership development opportunities for early years leaders internationally (pp.164-166). Since the publication of this article, there have been many text books for study in the subject of leadership in the early years (Aubrey, 2007; Jones & Pound, 2008; McDowall Clark & Murray, 2012; Moyles, 2006; Rodd, 2013; Siraj-Blatchford & Hallet, 2013). These publications are introductory, but do highlight the interplay of different discourses within early years leadership.

In his discussion of leadership of children’s services, Nick Frost (2009) also emphasises a social and motivational component for this sort of leadership;

“Leaders are seen as being responsible not only for managing services, in the technical sense of ensuring effectiveness and efficiency, but also for creating and inspiring a sense of vision that can galvanise the workforce.” (p.50)

In this context, “key leadership skills are about making sense of change, relating to people, creating a vision and developing new ways of working” (Ibid. p.49); competencies reflected both in the National Standards for leaders of Sure Start Children’s Centres (National College for School Leadership, 2007) and in guidance on “effective” Children’s Centre leadership (Sharp et al., 2012). In early years specific literature, the inter-personal and emotional activities of context are particularly emphasised, arguing it is “how the individual personally embraces, embodies and enacts leadership is the essence of its success” (Rodd, 2013, p.12) where leaders must, amongst other things, “understand themselves”, “accept responsibility”, “build trust, relationships and co-operation amongst colleagues” and “take action to realise the goals of their own and the potential of others” (Ibid. p.12).

Generally, the early years are presented as a turbulent, complex and contested context for professional identity formation. Gill McGillivray (2008) discusses the complexity of professional identity in the early years, and acknowledges the impact of “imposed changes in training, assessment and

qualifications, long held beliefs evident in discourse, ideology and day-to-day practices” on constructs of professional identity (p.242). Complexity is a key feature of context regularly discussed for the early years leader. For instance, Jones and Pound (2008) recognise that leadership in the early years is a “varied and fragmented, complex and often hectic process enacted in a context of rapid and unprecedented change” (Ibid. p.1).

Issues of change and ambiguity are reflected, amongst other things, in terminology relating to individuals with responsibility, where terms ‘management’ and ‘leadership’ are not used consistently. Rodd (2013) presents leadership as more “symbolic” in nature, with management being concerned with “tasks of the present, including planning, organising, co-ordinating and controlling” (p.8)³. Jones and Pound (2008) state that, in the early years, “Leadership is concerned with inspiring improvement through reflection and collaborative action” and that it is “relational and contextual” (p.23). Elsewhere, Jones and Pound (2008) emphasise leaders’ roles in “developing a team culture” (p.25), “supporting learning and development” (Ibid. p.107) and “leading in a multi-agency context” (Ibid. p.142). Overall, leadership is presented as a visionary and reflective activity, undertaken in a changing context, although these distinctions are by no means universally understood or used in practice, emphasising the ambiguous nature of tasks, roles and identity in the sector.

Returning to and building upon Mujis et al (2004) review, Carol Aubrey’s (2007) work recognises the limitations in the literature (p.13). Aubrey then goes on to state that there are “new and emerging forms of inter-professional leadership” (Ibid. p.7) within early childhood and links these to the time of rapid legislative and policy change for the sector previously discussed. It is telling that Aubrey (2007, p.20) needs to discuss the meaning of leadership, the nature of roles, and characteristics of leadership in these early years settings given the context described. Further, she highlights factors that inform an understanding of professional practice and leadership in the sector

³ There is varied use of the terms ‘management’ and ‘leadership’ across the early years literature, but both ‘management’ and ‘leadership’ roles, tasks and characteristics are reflected in the contemporary standards for Sure Start Children’s Centres (NCSL, 2007).

in discussing female gender imbalance (p.22), the link between level of qualification and status (Ibid. p.24), practitioner focus on quality featuring most highly (Ibid. p.27), and a focus on leadership characteristics such as dedication, and willingness to work with others (Ibid. p.28). Generally, Aubrey's (2007) findings present personal characteristics such as personal warmth and sympathy as a feature of professionals in the sector (p.31), who also display a preference for collaboration in decision making (Ibid. p.34).

Similar points are made by Janet Moyles (2006), who highlights the 'personal characteristics and attitudes' of early years leaders as one branch of her leadership typology. Moyles' (2006) typology emphasises leadership competencies such as knowledge and enthusiasm about children, intrinsic attraction to the profession, advocacy of creative and emotional intelligence and understanding of the importance of self-awareness, humour and the value of play (pp.125-159). This is clearly a positive and assertive view of the sector, contrasting with discourses of low status workforce and early years as a contested and little understood political agenda.

These themes also appear elsewhere in the literature, where much of the material sits comfortably within the paradigm of early education and care. This body of literature displays many positive characteristics, but parts also reflect implicit assumptions and values about the gendered nature of early years work and the purpose of early years education and care as identified by authors such as Dahlberg and Moss (2005), Fletcher (2004) and Osgood (2006). Consequently, these assumptions potentially obscure the challenges that leaders (and all) in the sector face in forging professional identity. In contrast to the affirmative position offered by Aubrey (2007) and Moyles (2006), Gunilla Dahlberg, Peter Moss and Alan Pence (2013) present the early years worker as defined by neo liberal, economic and instrumental (government) discourse:

"First she is a technician, whose task is to ensure the efficient production of the institution's outcomes, however framed, for example, transmitting a predetermined body of knowledge to the child or supporting the child's development to ensure that each milestone is reached at the correct age. The technology she administers incorporates a range of norms or standards: where the child should be

at his or her current stage of development and the achievable goal; what activities are appropriate to the child's stage of development; what the answers are to the questions that she puts to the child, and so on. The outcomes are known and prescribed, even though the child may be allowed some choice and freedom in how he or she achieves them. From a Foucauldian perspective, she is the effect of disciplinary power, but also exercises power in her work with children and parents, embodying the discourse of developmental psychology which produces understandings of the child and shapes practice with him or her" (p.67)

Whilst this view jars with more assertive or positive articulations of the early years worker or leader, it reflects a view of the sector, and professionals, as subject to a hegemonic definition of their work and status. Whilst official definitions of leadership of Sure Start Children's Centres in government literature strive to appear affirmative, some of these assumptions about role and status are implicit. For example, the drive to deliver results is clearly reflected in the National Standards for Leaders of Sure Start Children's Centres, where leaders are urged to "ensure that their centre really makes a difference to the children and families it serves" (National College for School Leadership, 2007, p.5). Here, the language is distinctly that of modernised public service discourse – being socially democratic, but also neo liberal, performance obsessed and instrumental. Tasks such as "Establishing and sustaining an environment of challenge and support where children are safe, can flourish and learn" and "Working with and through others to design and shape flexible, responsive services to meet the changing needs of children and families". (Ibid. p.5) subtly frames the leader with market forces, measurement and 'progress' of primary importance. These factors are reflected in leadership activities within these National Standards such as inter-personal skills, clear communication, understanding information and shaping effective services relevant to local need. "Key areas" of leadership competence listed are suitably ambiguous, such as "shaping the present and creating the future" or "being accountable and responsible" (Ibid. p.6). Under these headings and more, these standards are characterised by the many competencies listed within these areas, which in my own experience is daunting for leaders to review. Written in 2007, and overdue for revision, these standards seem to reflect a 'one leader, one centre' idea, which given

the substantial re-organisation Sure Start services by local authorities in the light of budget cuts is now not typical. Amongst practitioners, standards are seen to be dated but at the time of writing were still in place. More recent – government endorsed – material contains recommendations for leaders of Sure Start Children’s Centres from the National College for Teaching and Leadership⁴, tasked with leadership development for the sector. In their report authored for NCTL, “Highly Effective Leadership in Children’s Centres”, Caroline Sharpe et al (2012) identify a range of challenges for the leader of a Children’s Centre characterised by uncertainty, complexity, barriers and limitations and issues of staff morale (p.8). As a result, a range of “core behaviours” are identified, which reflect popular management speak such as “using business skills strategically”, “embracing integrated working” and “motivating and empowering staff” (p.9). Assumptions about the implicit value of integrated working or issues around “system leadership” are not discussed.

Official discussion of leadership and leadership tasks within this body of literature presents a fragmented picture with contradictory messages. Official material reflects technical (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.2) and performative (Ball, 2003; Osgood, 2004; 2006) themes affecting how leaders are defined and discussed (Rodd, 2013; Simpson, 2010).

A lack of academic discussion about the status, role and identity of early years leaders does not help clear up these contradictory messages. Mujis et al’s (2004) claim much is still to be learnt about leadership in this sector still remains true in many ways. Aubrey (2007) and Moyles (2006) reflect a general consensus that the early years sector continues to be turbulent, a point even more relevant at the time of writing in the context of financial austerity and contested policy agendas. The same authors are examples of those who offer a positive and affirmative view of what the ‘early years’ is (or should?) be about, a position I have contrasted with a critical and activist

⁴ The terms “National College for School Leadership” and “National College for Leadership of Schools and Children’s Services” both refer to the same organisation, established as a quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation (quango). The title “National College for Teaching and Leadership” also refers to the same organisation, but the name change reflects a change in status from quango to executive agency of the DfE, which occurred in June 2011.

position articulated by those such as Dahlberg et al (2013). This work, in turn, stands in contrast to the managerial tone of government endorsed material.

How all of this informs the questions of this study is equally complex. As might be expected, no *single* point of reference exists, and the leader of Sure Start Children's Centres stands to be defined in multiple ways. An affirmative, agentic view of Sure Start leadership competes with a critical perspective that warns of the objectification and domination of leader identity in the face of particular sorts of discourse, with much material between these two poles. Moving forward, guided by my focus on leadership *practices*, I look to the organisational context for leadership identity and identity work in the section that follows.

The organisation as active context for leadership identity

Contemporary organisation studies literature has particular relevance to the questions raised in the first chapter of this thesis as it has moved beyond its traditional emphasis on roles, structures and performance and has begun to investigate issues of process, power, gender and identity itself. This change in focus represents a shift from an economic and technical discourse, focusing for example on issues such as *productivity*, towards sociological concerns such as *doing*. As a result, studies of organisation have also become increasingly focused upon issues of activity and identity through recognition that organisations have an active, mutually constituting, relationship with individuals. Giddens (1991) reflects this in his very broad consideration that;

“...Modernity must be understood at on an institutional level; yet the transmutations introduced by modern institutions interlace in a direct way with individual life and therefore with the self” (p.1)

This connection is recognised in the rapid growth of identity related literature within the organisational studies genre, reflected in Mats Alvesson and Stefan Sveningsson's (2003) claim that "Identity is one of the most popular topics in contemporary organization studies" (p.1163). Within this literature,

Steen Wackerhausen (2009) proposes that any given 'professional identity' is given "content and form" by factors such as "neighbouring professions, technological developments, scientific progress, public opinion, [and the] national economy" (p.459). However, such factors are complicated further in an instable, performance orientated context, where professionalism is blurred with managerialism, such issues are addressed in Shirley Ardener and Fiona Moore's edited work (2007), which identifies themes in professional identity literature around power, shifting identities and change (p.11).

A key defining characteristic of professional identity is that it relates to a *professional context*. Because of this, much literature on professional identity is empirically grounded, and relates to organisational and disciplinary practices, a point made by Ardener and Moore (Eds., 2007, p.3).

Understanding identity, following Giddens (1991), is therefore ideally done within an organisational context. Watson's (2009) view that "Organizations, and especially the managerial hierarchies within them, are highly appropriate settings in which to look at identity construction processes." (p.426) are compatible with this analysis. Claims by authors such as Holly S. Slay and Delmonize A. Smith (2011), that "Career success is often associated with successful professional identity construction" (p.86) emphasise the practical treatment of the topic in this literature and focus on identity development over time.

A contemporary focus on organisational forms and practices recognises the theme of the "post-bureaucratic" state or organisation (Farrell & Morris, 2003, 2007; Williams, 2011) in the organisational studies and public administration literature. An optimistic position on the topic of the post-bureaucratic organisation is encapsulated by Christian Maravelias (2003) in stating "...post-bureaucracy is alleged to emancipate individuals from the formalistic constraints of bureaucracy, arranging them instead in organic and fluid networks." (p.547). Whilst less optimistic versions of this discussion exist elsewhere, there is a broad recognition that organisations such as Sure Start Children's Centres are relatively dynamic and unstable forms of public service delivery. Such is the context within which leaders' professional identities are developed and enacted.

The idea of the fluid and dynamic contemporary organisational context is given conceptual and empirical foundation by Yrjö Engeström (Engeström, Miettinen, & Punamäki, 1999; Engeström, 2001, 2004) who summarises the move from traditional forms of labour and organisation characterised by routine, specified tasks and unchanging conditions towards modern forms of work characterised by instability, change and permeable boundaries. I argue ideas of professional career and identity have followed a similar trajectory. Engeström (2001) also considers the shift from one paradigm of organisation to another in terms of what this means for work 'as learning';

“People and organizations are all the time learning something that is not stable, not even defined or understood ahead of time. In important transformations of our personal lives and organizational practices, we must learn new forms of activity which are not yet there. They are literally learned as they are being created. There is no competent teacher. Standard learning theories have little to offer if one wants to understand these processes.” (pp.137-138)

Engeström's work provides a helpful context for understanding the emergence and operation of Sure Start, and for the challenges facing the leaders of these services. He examines the way in which modern forms of collaborative work are undertaken in contexts displaying similar characteristics to the English integrated early years services; for example, in the organisation of children's health care in Helsinki (Engeström, 2001).

Theoretically related work undertaken by collaborators of Engeström examines individuals' work in such contexts. In a series of publications relating collaborative learning and professional practice in a UK Children's Services context (Daniels et al., 2008; Daniels et al., 2007; Edwards, 2009; Leadbetter et al., 2007) professional activity is examined in the context of in complex work with other professionals and families as a process of learning. Harry Daniels et al (Daniels et al., 2008) emphasise the need for effective practitioners to develop a range of interpersonal and dialogical skills including “being responsive to others”, “Clarifying the purpose of work and being open to alternatives”, “Knowing how to know who (can help)”, “Creating and developing better (material and discursive) tools.” and “Understanding oneself and one's professional values” (pp.32-33). The study

by Daniels et al (2008) presents a theoretical and empirical argument for focusing on what people do together in settings and services such as Sure Start, making links to issues of changing practices and professional identity. Such a focus on professional identity as *participation* is echoed in anthropologically influenced approaches discussed by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991), Wenger (1999) and Jason Hughes, Nick Jewson and Lorna Unwin (Eds., 2007) in relation to the idea of “communities of practice”. Together, such work represents a consideration of *connections* between professional practices and, in this case knowledge and learning to *do* and to *be*. It also examines professional responses to the sorts of instable contexts previously identified. These concerns are relevant to this thesis.

In a similar focus on the responsive relationship between individual and organisational context, sociological work such as Giddens (1991) identifies selfhood as a “reflexive project” (p.32). In modern organisations such as those discussed by Engeström (2001) and Daniels et al (2008) the reflexive self-project faces a range of dilemmas in a world of “an indefinite range of possibilities” (Giddens, 1991, p.189). Specifically, Giddens (1991) highlights the tensions between consistency and adapting behaviour appropriately (p.190); noting the difficulties the individual faces in taking control whilst operating in powerful social systems and regimes of knowledge (Ibid. pp.191-195). Most fundamentally, Giddens (1991) highlights the challenge of meaninglessness to the reflexive self-project in an institutional context (p.201), an issue I will examine later.

As Glen E. Kreiner, Elaine C. Hollensbe and Mathew L. Sheep (2006, p.1320) suggest, in this context, professional identity is problematic, as individuals seek to, as Monica Lindgren and Nils Wåhlin (2001) state, “construct a stable social identity” (p.358) in a meaningful, consistent and coherent professional project. Lindgren and Wåhlin (2001) argue that individuals experience challenges as “discontinuities...[which] often bear some resemblance to personal crises and transformation” (pp.369-370). As a consequence of the personal nature of these professional ‘discontinuities’, individuals may, as Lindgren and Wåhlin (2001) reveal, “seek a deeper philosophy in their travel through their working lives, and try to open the

boundaries between professional and private spheres in making sense of their lives." (p.373). Here, Steen Wackerhausen (2009) says that in this context, "...“foreign” questions, terms, concepts and perspectives" (p.471) can be a helpful challenge and stimulation to individuals' self-development.

Recognition that individual identity in an organisational context is an active project is also discussed in terms of acting and doing at work. Here, literature draws attention to the *deployment* and *construction* of professional identities in such contexts. Reference to destabilised professional identities is underlined for Mats Alvesson and Stefan Sveningsson (2003) as part of the sociological turn to professional identity literature, where they state;

"Even though turbulence and instability may sometimes be exaggerated, in many organizational and life situations, the elements of change, contradiction and fragmentations are salient and create reactions such as curiosity, anxiety and search for ways of actively dealing with identity." (p.1167)

Further, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) also draw attention to the ways in which identity is something adjusted, practiced and reflexive, keeping 'in tune' with organisational demands. The idea of professional identity related to *role* is not dispensed with, but *role* is not placed centrally in the analysis; "Roles influence identity, but roles are also formed (and enlarged, modified, marginalized, rejected) in identity work" (Ibid. p.1178). Neither does professional identity simply seek to mirror organisational identity – research such as that by Andrew D. Brown and Michael Humphries (2002, p.425) shows that individuals may relate, nor relate, partially relate or may feel impartial about organisational narratives. Professional identity is instead, as Mike Dent and Stephen Whitehead (Eds., 2013) suggest in dynamic relation to a *way of being*; a technique related to discipline practiced by;

"the flexible, reflective practitioner, the teamworker, lifelong learner, a person concerned to constantly update their knowledge and skills base, to be market orientated, managerial, if not entrepreneurial" (p.3)

In returning to the notion of professional identity as *process*, highlighted by Dent and Whitehead (Eds. 2013, p.9), Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) state, "Individuals and organizations are said to be better understood in terms of becoming rather than being" (p.1164). Here 'becoming' occurs in the

interplay between “organizational discourses, role expectations, narrative self-identity and identity work” (Ibid. p.1163). Professional identity is therefore something ‘worked out’; consequently, William B. Swan Jr., Russell E. Johnson and Jennifer K. Bosson (2009) suggest, along with Watson (2009) and Kirsi LaPointe (2010) that individuals seek to achieve ‘fit’ with organisational narratives and objectives in an on-going, flexible and subtle way.

The notion of ‘identity work’ in professional contexts as a *social* undertaking is also significant: Dent and Whitehead (2013) argue that identity work is marked out by “performativity, that defining characteristic of ‘the post-modern condition’” (p.4). Further, Dent and Whitehead (2013) argue that in this light, individualistic activity such as ‘fitting’ is transformed into the signifying practices discussed by those such as Judith Butler (Ibid. p.5); where identity work is concerned with *displaying* and *communicating*. Dent and Whitehead (2013) effectively place such professional signifying practices within an elaborate social matrix, where talking with the authority of the ‘professional’ is meaningless “unless the discursive association is prior held and legitimized in the eyes of others” (p.5). This highlights, significantly, that professional selves need ‘others’.

The implications of conceptualising professional identity in social terms are significant. Keith Richards (2006) points to the limits to the *individuality* of professional identity, where; “...” (p.146). This suggests, as Richards states, that ‘my story’ is not simply ‘my story’, but is about the “...social and interactional expectations that bind me and other participants in a functional relationship that makes it possible to achieve personal and social ends...” (Ibid. p.37). Individual *agency* may therefore be limited in Alvesson and Sveningsson’s (2003, p.1176) identification that individuals seek to *build*, *manoeuvre* and *test out* identity.

It can be seen that organisation studies literature presents practice, and more specifically leadership, as *situated* (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Sioban, 2007) *enacted* (Raelin, 2011) and *established together* (Engeström, 2003). In this context, Jean-Louis Denis, Ann Langley and Linda Rouleau (2010) draw

attention to the “dynamic, collective, situated and dialectical character of doing leadership as a practical activity” (p.72).

More specifically, limited discussion of Sure Start Children’s Centres as organisational context reflects some of the themes established so far. In multi-professional children’s services, Mark Robinson and David Cottrell (2009) identify the on-going significance of “Roles, identities, status and power” (p.553). Further, Patricia Sloper (2004), writing about the facilitators and barriers related to co-ordinated work in settings such as Sure Start, identifies a context of lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities, poor communication and information sharing, and lack of time for joint working (p.576) which impact on individuals. Efforts to explain professionalism or professional identity the early years sector and in Sure Start are under-developed and lack an understanding of agency (Simpson, 2010), reflecting a poorly defined sense of career trajectory (Davenport, 2012, p.12).

In Sure Start too, practice can be characterised as something situated, enacted and established with no ‘blue print’ for working together. Eleanor Jupp (2013) reflects this view in her own claim that Children’s Centres are “structured by a range of hybrid dynamics, interactions and identifications” (pp.183-184). As a consequence, those in the sector experience either frustration or learning at professional boundaries as outlined by Sanne Akkerman (2011) as they seek to establish shared professional practice in integrated working (Oliver, Mooney, & Statham, 2010). In Sure Start, ‘practice’ is therefore also an active process that requires engagement and openness to change on the part of those working within it.

Studies conducted within Sure Start Centres identify, but generally do not discuss in detail, collaborative practice in this context (Davenport, 2012; Hassan, Spencer, & Hogard, 2006; Morrow & Malin, 2007; Sharp et al., 2012) pointing out a need for a study that examines the relation of identity and practices in more depth. However, challenges relating to the interaction of different professional cultures (each with their own languages, perspectives, priorities and practices) are documented well in literature examining collaboration in integrated children’s services. The presence of

instability and uncertainty identified elsewhere in organisational studies' literature is identified within Sure Start, where "the experience of interprofessional collaboration can generate considerable uncertainty, in particular about where individual or collective responsibility lies" (Edgley & Avis, 2006, p.433). Further, Angela Anning, David Cottrell, Nick Frost, Josephine Green and Mark Robinson (2006) identify that the challenge of coping with uncertainty and the pace of change and risk present *procedural* challenges to professionals used to set ways of working (p.98) in what Rick Hood (2012) called a "technocratic culture" (p.1). In the face of this, Hood (2012) underlines the significance of *relationships* between people where professional practice is something *experienced* (p.3)

To conclude, within the broad body of organisational studies related literature, professional identity is situated within a context that has several distinct features. Specifically, professional identity is enacted and constructed in contexts which are fluid, dynamic, contested and ambiguous, but where the individual has the unenviable task of establishing a coherent career narrative. Importantly, there is a significant lack of understanding about how professional identity is enacted and constructed in the early years, and for leaders in Sure Start Children's Centres specifically. The issue of how individual leaders learn to *be* and to *do* leadership and how they *experience* selfhood is now examined through literature that deals with professional, pedagogic and phenomenological themes.

Disciplinary, pedagogic and phenomenological lenses on identity

Literature relating to professional disciplines as well as pedagogical literature utilised in discussion of leadership in Sure Start Children's Centres, together with literature on the theme of first person experience will be examined here to inform the questions I set out in the first chapter of this thesis. Discussion of this material allows me to explore in further depth what it means to 'become' a professional in the fluid and ambiguous context previously described, as well as how the topics of narrative and social activity are related to identity.

In terms of a disciplinary group, early years and the work of Sure Start Children's Centres as an interdisciplinary endeavour relate to much literature on professions such as teaching, nursing and social work. Literature relating to these professions generally makes more frequent use of approaches to professional identity which privilege themes of interpretation, experience, learning and ethics as exemplified in Ingegerd Fagerberg's (2004) and Douwe Beijaard, Paulien C. Meijer and Nico Verloop's (2004) work. Specifically, in professions such as family therapy and social work topics of identity and selfhood are given theoretical recognition and are incorporated into discussion of practice. Social work literature such as Deena Mandell (2007) makes reference to "use of self" (p.1) as a core concept, with roots in clinical therapy, specifically with regard to the practice of psychoanalysis and the concept of transference. Further, Mandell (2007) describes the way concepts such as transference necessarily bring *subjectivity* into professional relationships, as social workers are required to consider reflexivity and personal values.

Education and social care literature emphasise professional identity as an interactive, participative endeavour. Amy B.M. Tsui (2007), Sue Lasky (2005), and Davi S. Reis (2011) all use a *sociocultural* lens as described by Lev Vygotsky (1930-1934/1978), James V. Wertsch (1991), Etienne Wenger (1999) and others to do this. Wertsch (1991) articulates socio-cultural concerns in drawing attention to "the essential relationship between these [human, mental] processes and their cultural, historical and institutional settings" (p.6). In education, Tsui (2007) identifies the "dual process of identification and negotiation of meanings" (p.657), associated with 'becoming' a teacher and the development of professional identification as a *participative* process, whereby:

"Identification is both reificative and participative. Reification involves inclusion as well as exclusion from membership in various communities. Membership is inseparable from competence. Central to the process of identification is participation as well as nonparticipation" (p.674)

Cate Watson (2006) also suggests that teacher identity relates to this theme of participation, where there are choices, associations and opportunities to

demonstrate competence. Wider still, this complexity of professional identity formation in education and social care is highlighted in many studies: in nursing contexts, for example, Fagerberg (2004) highlights the active construction of professional identity as a project, noting;

"the complex interrelation between the health care organization, individual attributes of nurses and care of patients, and constitute the difficulties and joys that exist in RNs' work." (p.290)

Within these social, complex professional environments 'being a professional' is presented as a discursive achievement. Beijgaard et al (2004) draw attention to the links between individual conceptualisations of identity and how individuals conceptualise their professional community. In their review of research on teachers' professional identity, the authors also identify material that discusses how lay theories shape professional identity and how the focus on being a rational and instrumental actor ignores the authentic and discursive self, which is of importance.

Professional identity in much of this literature is presented as a sense-making undertaking, responding to what Sue Lasky (2005) describes as the "dynamic interplay among teacher identity, agency, and context" (p.899). However, there are limitations as Rachel Kaiser (2002) suggests, regarding the development of professional identity. Discussing medical students, Kaiser (2002) argues that,

"the current system of medical training, reflected as well in cultural representations such as film, encourages medical students and doctors to adopt a rigidly-defined, fixed professional identity, one that perpetuates patriarchy, limits uniqueness, squelches inquisitiveness and curiosity, and can even harm one's self-confidence and pride" (p.104)

Kaiser (2002) confirms that life, structure and culture of organisations are not a passive backdrop to highly subjective and individualised professional identity, but are intimately connected to it; creating conditions which provoke what Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) term "identity work".

As in the organisational studies literature previously discussed, professional identity literature within the education and social care sectors highlights the significance of change over time. Many studies focus on early career or

student identities, but some recognise the temporal (or career) dimension crucial to professional identity. For example Lasky (2005) highlights the role of political and social context in addition to initial training for teachers, and Fargerberg (2004) points to ways in which professional development for nurses “means the integration of their knowledge and experience and an ability to change from focusing on the parts to the whole” (p.289).

Onwards, material relating to *Early Childhood Education* contains pedagogical material, which to some degree, speaks to issues of identity, or at least role. Material by Iram Siraj-Blatchford and Laura Manni (2007) draw on pedagogical research undertaken in education and care settings (Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Stella, Gilden, & Bell, 2002). Here, the early childhood professional has identified skills that Siraj-Blatchford and Manni (2007), highlight as including;

“...contextual literacy, a commitment to collaboration, and to the improvement of children’s learning outcomes should be considered (by definition) to provide fundamental requirements for Leadership for Learning.” (p.15)

In addition, Siraj-Blatchford and Manni (2007) list a range of “Effective leadership practices” (p.16) which define the early childhood educator via an emphasis on the social and collaborative individual. Practically, the focus of these skills is facilitating the educational attainment of children, although literature does begin to reflect some concern with reviewing the aims of early childhood education, and the role and identity of those within this field. If this seems to offer limited resources for this study, where material on early childhood pedagogy *does* speak to issues of identity and narrative identity practices in a less technical way, it does so implicitly or by association. Material such as that authored by McDowell Clark and Murray (2012) and Dahlberg and Moss (2005) consider early education through a critical and ethical lens and in so doing emphasise the sort of relations, and by implication, the *persons*, who work with young children. For example, McDowell Clark and Murray (2012) imply a certain sort of *person* in their statement that;

“Early years practice is based on co-constructivist pedagogy which provides a way of working and learning as adults and children through dialogue, purposeful action, interaction and reflection.” (p.30)

Beyond this, McDowell Clark and Murray (2012) identify specific capacities such as “catalytic agency” (Ibid. p.45), “inner reflective integrity” (Ibid, p.57) and “relational interdependence” (Ibid. pp.70 and 104) that also speak of professional personhood, albeit implicitly.

Elsewhere, pedagogic literature ‘opens up’ the question of the identity of the early years leader or professional in implicit ways as the sector reflects on developments on an international scale. Linda Miller, Carmen Dalli and Mathias Urban (2012) present a case for a “grown up” early childhood profession which has “...travelled up the priority list of national policy agendas across the globe” (p.3). Specifically, they argue that “growing up” “has opened up a space [for professionals] – to engage in debate about the nature of their practice.” (Ibid. p.4). The authors consider a range of cultural sites for early education and draw on collaborative international research, stressing that professionalism is constituted by being “...embedded in local contexts, visible in relational interactions, ethical and political in nature, and involving multiple layers of knowledge, judgement, and influences from the broader societal context” (Ibid. p.6). This material is therefore useful in a general sense in terms of drawing attention to the ways in which “...there is no universal early childhood profession...but that ‘there are always new and surprising ways of being and doing’...” (Ibid. p.133).

Beyond material on early years education, there is a limited body of pedagogical and professional literature which discusses the National Professional Qualification for Integrated Centre Leadership (NPQICL) programme for Sure Start Children’s Centre leaders. At the time of writing, the NPQICL was in its final year of delivery as a professional qualification, accompanied by a post graduate certificate, offered by the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) through contracted delivery consortia in the English regions. The programme was based on experiential (Kolb, 1983; Moon, 2004; Schon, 1991) and andragogical (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011) principles, and represented a ‘house style’ for Children’s Centre

leaders (*"National Professional Qualification"*, n.d). It emphasised self-challenge, reflection and participation in the NPQICL 'learning community' through journaling, team tasks and leadership mentoring and as such privileged themes such as experiential learning, emotional intelligence and dialogue.

Literature relating in different ways to the NPQICL emphasises these themes, including the orientation towards a distinctive philosophical approach noting claims of 'impact' upon participants professional identities (Isaac & Trodd, 2008); the focus on experiential learning, challenge and support (Whalley et al., 2008) and the experience of mentors in building confidence, purpose and sense of agency with leader participants (John, 2008).

Research undertaken by Lynn Ang (2012), drawing on 359 survey participants and 15 telephone interviews with leaders associated with the NPQICL highlighted themes such as the importance of integrated and multi-agency working, reflective learning and status and pay as key external factors in affecting individuals' perceptions of leadership. Further, Sue Webster and Annie Clouston (in Trodd & Chivers, 2011, (Eds.)) draw on their facilitation of the Children's Centre leaders network highlighting the value placed by Children's Centre leaders on dialogue (Ibid, p.84) and having a professional development mechanism (Ibid. p.96). Webster and Clouston reflect on their work with Children's Centre leaders, drawing upon Wenger's (1999) concept of Community of Practice and discuss the idea of "having courage" as a leader supported by the experience of "being connected", "feeling that you count" and "believing that you are capable" (in Trodd and Chivers, 2011, (Eds.), p.97).

Additionally, one strand of this material addresses the topic of leadership in relation to the principles of community development. Material by Margy Whalley (2006; 1995, 2007) is of relevance here, which addresses themes of community development, leadership and issues of rights and empowerment for children and families. In this context, leadership is viewed through a practical, ethical, activist lens, something reflected in professional

publications such as the Children's Centre Leader Reader (Lant, January/February, 2012) which positions the leader of a Sure Start Children's Centre as a community entrepreneur and catalyst;

"Leading others, can sometimes mean leading without authority, which is familiar territory to Children's Centre Leaders (CCLs). As architects of our centre's, and often community's, vision we create the dream that others want to buy into and we take responsibility for finding the people and sustaining the motivation to build it into a reality. More and more, those working with us may not be direct staff reports. It's likely they will be families, local entrepreneurs, partners – people who want to contribute because they can see the vision makes sense and they can make a real difference, not because you pay their wages" (Ibid. p.2)

Returning to the NPQICL, Lynn Trodd (2012) provides multiple insights into the process of professional learning and identity development within the role of leaders. In her doctoral study, Trodd (2012) sets out to:

"explore the developing professional identities of NPQICL participants from their own perspectives, focusing on ways in which their professional identities are developing and how, correspondingly, these might be better supported on the NPQICL." (p.2)

Specifically, Trodd (2012) analyses leaders' narratives in the production of storied accounts and utilises an iterative, adaptive theoretical approach which she argues, allows her to consider subjectivity within social contexts and the resources they offer. She examines;

"how public influences and individual co-constructions of professional identity shaped by professionals themselves are synthesised in individual responses to fluid, uncertain professional identities" (p.3)

Trodd (2012) identifies and refines a range of themes focusing on, in my words, empowerment (p.171), capability (p.175), recognising own success (p.178), boldness or courage (p.182), adult learning (p.189), and reflecting in a learning community (p.193). These themes are related to a range of working themes such as "co-construction" and "professional agency" (p.134) in forming storied accounts and themes.

Trodd's (2012) study emphasises the relationships between what she calls "A capable professional identity characterised by resilience and authenticity" within the specific context of a "Social Constructivist approach of a

professional learning programme” (p.282). In this context, Trodd provides storied themes which link personal and professional efficacy, agency and autonomy, and highlights the ways in which the learning community supports the creation of what she calls “stories to work by” (Ibid.). To conclude, Trodd (2012) states that;

“the learning approach of the NPQICL, the activities, experiences, reflection, focus on self and interactions with trusted others in the learning community lead to self-awareness and authenticity in their leadership roles.” (p.271)

Material on disciplinary and pedagogical themes has so far been examined to consider topics and questions set out in the first chapter of this thesis. Whilst this material has little to say about the specific questions of this study, it is broadly useful in focusing attention on professional personhood as something that is relational, ethical and something experienced. I therefore consider that topic in the final part of this section, drawing on work on phenomenology as it is a subject area that attempts to deal with the topics of experience and identity. As with material previously considered, I will consider the extent to which it can inform the questions of this thesis.

In general terms, as Michael Lewis and Tanja Staehler (2010) state, phenomenology deals with experience from the first person perspective and ideas of appearances, manifestations, intentionality and the ‘things themselves’ (pp.1-5) where David Carr (1991,1998) notes the first person perspective is significant. Within phenomenology, a contrast may be made between the descriptive, non-explanatory, scientific claims of Edmund Husserl’s work as noted by Carr (1998) and other varieties, including the hermeneutical phenomenology of Heidegger (1927/2010). For Husserl (1931/2012), phenomenology addressed;

“...the world in which I find myself and which is also my world-about-me...the complex forms of my manifold and shifting spontaneities of consciousness stand related: observing in the interests of research the bringing of meaning into conceptual form through description; comparing and distinguishing, collecting and counting, presupposing and inferring, the theorizing activity of consciousness, in short, in its different forms and stages” (p.53)

In thinking about consciousness, Husserl's (1931/2012) urge is to "...become acquainted with the world as immediately given me...In the natural urge of life I live continually in this fundamental form of all "wakeful" living" (pp.53-54). Beyond this, the influence of phenomenology can be seen the sociological work of authors such as Alfred Schutz (1973; 1972) and hermeneutic variations offered by Martin Heidegger (1927/2010) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1960/2013). In particular, Heidegger's work (1927/2010) included an interpretive role for phenomenology and dealt with the experience of being in the world through involvement, engagement and 'care'. In so doing, his work deals with issues of 'authentic' selfhood, characterised by choice. For Heidegger, choice is made possible from the understanding (*Verstehen*) of possibilities, something that comes from engaged involvement with others (Ibid. p.114). This interpretive form of phenomenology is carried through into contemporary work on identity and selfhood by authors such as Jonathan A. Smith, Paul Flowers and Michael Larkin (2009). This has been utilised specifically in health and social care research, for instance in work by authors such as Craig Murray and Robert Harrison (2004); Matthew T. D. Knight, Til Wykes and Peter Hayward (2003) and Pnina Shinebourne and Jonathan A. Smith (2009) where this generally focuses on individuals' sense-making of major life experiences.

However, my concern in this chapter is to consider the potential contribution of phenomenology to the questions of my study, which are to do with identity, narrative, practical experience and their relations and not to review the historical development or various branches of phenomenology. In order to examine any potential contribution of phenomenology to the topics of my study, I will draw upon Shaun Gallagher's (2012) text that provides a suitable scholarly review of this body of literature.

Whilst Gallagher (2012) notes that this large body of work is complex and at times incoherent, part of its appeal is its apparent relation to the topics of identity and experience. Putting aside limitations of the perspective or method of phenomenology, which is distinguished by not being characterised as a theory (p.8), one can identify potential contributions to this study. Firstly, the concept of lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) provides a context for individual

experience, by describing the experiences and inter-subjectivity that defines human existence and shapes human capabilities (p.2). This is a contribution to my own study only insofar that phenomenology recognises that individual experience and representation is shaped by social experience, a claim shared with much sociological theory. Beyond this, I argue below that much Husserlian phenomenology is not equipped to address the questions I ask.

However, hermeneutic and philosophical phenomenology do offer some resources to my study which I argue can be utilised pragmatically without subscribing to the whole body of phenomenological ideas. Amongst other things, Gallagher (2012) highlights the questions raised by hermeneutic phenomenology on the topics of narrative and being / ontology. Specifically, Heidegger (1927/2010) and Gadamer (1960/2013) emphasise the role of narrative in bringing consistency and coherence to experience. In a more fundamental way, Heidegger's work has specific relevance to this thesis in that he adapts the concept of the lifeworld as the ontology of "being-in-the-world" (Gallagher, 2012, p.165), which is characterised by the practical, pragmatic opportunities that are ready-to-hand, connecting to form a network of involvement (p.166, p.188), shaping individuals' sense-making capabilities. For Heidegger, practical knowledge is valued over Aristotle's preferred theoretical knowledge (Gallagher, 2012, p.166), a perspective that is directed to my concerns around the practices of identity work.

Elsewhere, phenomenology offers resources which may be 'picked out' from the broader body of work which define it. Phenomenological literature discusses the significance of intentionality (Gallagher, 2012, p.62) as a characteristic of experience, where human action is considered in terms of that which enables it. In terms of the concerns of this study, the idea of intentionality potentially connects concepts of "mineness" (p.129), action and time, anchoring the individual in a conceptual network of action and identification. Further, some phenomenological literature is concerned with the related issue of agency (Ibid. p.170) where discussion of "post-activity attributions" to action point to the significance of ascribing personal valuations and meanings to practical action. Generally, phenomenologies'

concern with the “I can” of embodied experience (Ibid. p.114) usefully ties time, action and meaning together in a similar conceptual network.

The potential for phenomenology - even the concepts set out above - for application to this study are limited, however. Whilst a perspective that develops a conceptual network friendly to the ontological concerns of identity is welcomed, I argue that phenomenological work as a whole is inconsistent and incoherent, does not sufficiently concern itself with the social or narrative processes I address, and is weakened by its characterisation as description (Ibid. p.7). For example, Husserl’s concern to develop a rigorous study of first person experience has been significantly complicated by the rise of cognitive science, leading Gallagher to note that the cognitive critique of phenomenology is that it has nothing to tell us - no methods, no data or results (Ibid. p.30). Further, phenomenology may claim that knowledge comes through experience, but much phenomenological work seems to ignore the role of the symbolic (seen in language or the materiality of artefacts) and the argument of philosophers such as G.H. Mead (1934/1967) that meaning is located in the social act. Finally, phenomenology’s idea of the *epoché*, where the use of theory in considering experience is “bracketed out” and “natural attitude” is prioritised (Gallagher, 2012, pp.43-44), ignores the potential for a dynamic relationship between practical experience and pre-existing habits, ideas or symbolic resources such as those found in narrative.

As I have suggested, the focus on practical relationships, ontology and narrative found in the work of Heidegger (1927/2010) and Gadamer (1960/2013) begins to orientate theoretical resources to this study. What both of these lacks is a more developed consideration of the relationship between hermeneutic phenomenology and the topics of narrative and personal identity. I argue in the next chapter that this framework is offered by the work of Paul Ricoeur.

Feminist and critical voices on early years leadership identity

Whilst personal experience has been central to feminist writing on identity, this body of literature has utilised a wide variety of thought to also bring *critical* perspectives to concepts of identity, examining the constituting influence of power and the significance of practices on identity. Whilst I focus my discussion to feminist related material as it speaks to early childhood, I note that feminist work on identity is diverse, drawing variously on psychoanalysis, queer theory and postmodern and post-structuralist literature and I do not attempt to provide a general review of it here. However, I note that feminist literature generally critiques the operation of power and representational politics in subjects such as the reproduction of gender domination and gender as something attributed and performed, or *gendered* as shown in the work of Suzanne J. Kessler and Wendy McKenna (1984) and Judith Butler (1999).

Feminist critiques of 'professional identity' draw attention to the ways in which the concept has typically been informed by specific disciplines and perspectives. A feminist stance enables a critique of assumptions about the purpose of work, the operation of power, the establishment of credibility and so on, arguing that work on professional identity has largely spoken to those members of society deemed to be 'professional'; in other words, western, white, middle class and masculine. Consequently, feminism, along with writing on race and post-colonialism has been influential in shaping the general terms of contemporary identity literature, as highlighted by authors such as Morwenna Griffiths (1995), and has examined the ways in which persons achieve their status and identity, or have these things forced upon them. Judith Butler (1999) asks;

"To what extent is "identity" a normative ideal rather than a descriptive feature of experience? And how do the regulatory practices that govern gender also govern intelligible notions of identity?" (p.23)

Here, Butler draws attention to the ways in which the category of identity, like gender, is an idea shaped and presented to individuals as something to aspire, or conform, to. Further, the category of identity, like gender, is defined by a dominant system. In provoking thought on categories of gender (and

identity generally), Butler reflects a general feminist orientation towards the ways in which 'identity' exists within systems of power and discourse.

Literature which specifically applies these views to leadership identity in early childhood services is limited. However, where they are applied, feminist perspectives form a small but significant and powerful strand of material on leadership in early childhood. Feminist orientated literature by authors such as Osgood (2006) identify ways in which masculine, managerialist discourses of professional identity privilege their own ontology (professional 'truths' and ways of being) and epistemology (what counts as 'professional' and how it is known).

In recognising that many changes are "imposed", some literature reflects the idea that individuals in the early years are subject to dominant economic (technical, managerial) and gendered discourses. Osgood (2012) draws attention to "...some of the ways in which discourses of maternalism, and what it means to be a good mother/nursery worker, have been embedded in discourses of ECEC" (p.87); following this, Osgood (2012) acknowledges that 'being professional' or 'competent' are fundamentally gendered concepts. The implication is that if these criteria are passively accepted, what is *also* accepted are a host of attendant ideas about maternalism and being a woman; ideas that have been subject to feminist critique.

In this literature, professional identity and leadership in the early years are identified as contested and ambiguous topics. In particular, the nature of "corporatised childcare" in the sector contributes towards what Christine Woodrow (in Dalli & Urban, 2012, Eds.) describe as "competing and contradictory discourses of professional identity" (p.138) that individuals experience, influencing in turn the definition and regulation of their professional identity. Within the sector, as Julia Manning-Morton (2006) states, professional identity is subject to;

"...an ongoing and contested debate within the early years community. The current situation has arisen from the historical context of early years provision that has traditionally been divided between 'care and 'education' and provision for children aged over or under three years. This context has allowed a concept of

professionalism to emerge that values some practitioners' areas of expertise more than others'." (p.44)

Such divisions do nothing to promote the "creation and negotiation of shared professional identities" (Ibid. p.191), as they limit opportunity for "shared collective identity to act as a form of resistance to top-down policy imposition to achieve emancipatory ends" (Ibid. pp.195-196). Typically, discursive resources available to individuals for conceptualising and elaborating professional identity are limited, confused and prepared by others and still has a huge impact on what is seen as the technical and managerialist agenda (Ball, 2003), and competition exists *within* different types of early years provision and disciplinary heritages for 'what counts' as *being professional or leading*.

Measured against corporatised views of professional identity, certain groups are found wanting, or do not 'fit' as Osgood (2006) argues in relation to early childhood professionals. Professionalism, Osgood (2006) argues, "...is gendered, classed and 'raced' [and] is readily obscured from public debate" (p.1), a point developed by authors such as Silvia Gherardi and others who discuss the existence of gendered organisational cultures and what it means to be, as Gherardi (1996) states, "Women Travellers in a Male World". Here, gender is offered not as a point of *identification* but as a site of cultural inquiry, in relation to the professional identity of both men and women. This is in contrast to the idea of professionalism as a gendered construction "...against the backdrop of increased state regulation and demands for performativity in the early years" (Osgood, 2006, p.187), the nature of 'post-heroic' leadership (Fletcher, 2004) and the gendered concept of 'care' in the early years sector (Woodrow & Busch, 2008, p.89). The theme of resistance to, and questioning of, gendered concepts of professionalism and leadership identity is clear in this body of work. For example, Saija Katila and Susan Meriläinen (2002) explore professional strategies in the light of a professional masculine hegemony. They call into question "the gendered articulations of professionalism manifested in our everyday organizational discourses" (p.337) where professional identity for men *and* women is inextricably linked to gendered definitions of performance and competence. In their exploration,

the authors identify various forms of resistance, and draw attention to “rejection of formal designations of organizational identity” as well as efforts to replace dominant discourses about ‘being a professional’ (Ibid. p.339). Professional identity, through a gender lens, stands out as a distinctly *political* activity, as liirs Aaltio-Marjosola and Albert J. Mills (2002) claim:

"if identity is contested, it stands as a site where powerful forces clash...How one identifies - and with whom one identifies - has enormous consequences for how compliant or resistant one is to existing organizational arrangements" (p.92)

What is urged through this body of literature is the potential to disrupt understandings of professional identity and gender (S. Mavin, Bryans, & Waring, 2004). Sharon Mavin and Gina Grandy (2012) aim to “unsettle gender binaries” (p.228) in their discussion of professional identity and contend that, through an examination of practices or enactments,

"...our construction enables space for alternative understandings of doing gender well (or appropriately in congruence with sex category), and differently, through simultaneous, multiple enactments of femininity and masculinity, to emerge." (Ibid. p.227)

In short, feminist material speaks to the topic of narrative identity practices central to this thesis. Specifically, it emphasises the need to avoid ways of looking at identity that accept ‘given’ identifications and to examine ways in which professional identity (gendered and otherwise) is constructed and interacts with dominant discourses. It positions this thesis as an opportunity to *reconceptualise* identity for individuals as an *active* task (Woodrow & Busch, 2008; Mavin & Grandy, 2012). Narrative work around identity will be discussed in the next section through an examination of the idea of narrative practices.

Narrative practices and the professional self

I have so far shown how contemporary literature on organisational, disciplinary, pedagogical and feminist themes emphasises the importance of the narrative identity as something which is dynamic, social and practical. Further, I have identified that any consideration of professional identity

should examine *practices* associated with the construction, understanding and deployment of narrative identity.

Such concerns have been reflected in leading contemporary literature on narrative addressing biographical, professional and organisational themes, from influential figures such as Norman Denzin (1989, 1997, 2014), Donald Polkinghorne (1988), D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly (2004) and Barbara Czarniawska (1997, 2004). In different ways, all have paid particular attention to narrative strategies and practices. Specifically, their work presents understandings of narrative work as an on-going, active project. Here, Polkinghorne (1988) uses his own term of *narrative enrichment* in relation to biography and its changing context for the individual. He states that;

“Narrative enrichment occurs when one retrospectively revises, selects and orders past details in such a way as to create a self-narrative that is coherent and satisfying and that will serve as a justification for one’s present condition and situation. The retrospective revision needs to conclude and coincide with the known present. Narrative constructions are the socially derived and expressed product of repeated adventures.” (p.106)

Like Polkinghorne, Dan P. McAdams (1997) identifies the need for narrative practices to ‘work’, saying “We must seek credibility in our life stories. The good, mature and adaptive personal myth cannot be based on gross distortions. Identity is not a fantasy” (p.111). McAdams (1997) also points to both the necessary history of the narrative self and to its form as a structure that evolves over time. Elsewhere, authors such as Watson (2009) highlight identity work involved in relating various social identities to achieve a “relatively coherent and distinctive notion of personal self-identity” (p.431).

Polkinghorne, McAdams, Watson and others address the implications of narrative practice. The narrative self, enacted in narrative practices, *implies* and *signifies* identity but is not a legal inscription or record. There is not a simplistic classification of identity or understanding of selfhood achieved through the narrative self. As McAdam (1997) discusses, stories of the self have multiple functions and a storied life presents multiple possibilities and

invites identity work for individuals and those encountering their self-narratives. Watson (2009) states;

"Although there is a great deal of taken-for-grantedness in all of our lives, every one of us is faced with an enormous range of possible meanings that might be attached to our situations. We have to make choices within these – not just about what we are going to do with our lives but about who we are. We therefore have to engage in identity work. Furthermore, within our identity work we make narratives as well as using those which our cultures make available to us." (p.430)

Material on narrative practices therefore connects narrative identity and practical action, which is a central concern of this thesis. Holstein and Gubrium (2000), for example, see practice as the *how* and *what* of narrative. Beyond this, specific definitions of narrative practice shed light on ways in which they are seen to operate. Anna De Fina and Alexandra Georgakopoulou (2008) see narrative practices as;

"...*emergent*, a joint venture and the outcome of negotiation by interlocutors. Allowing for interactional contingency is the hallmark of a sufficiently process-oriented and elastic model of narrative that 'opens up rather than closes off the investigation of talk's business' (Edwards, 1997: 142) and that accounts for the consequentiality and local relevance of stories. This alerts analysts to the dangers of attributing one sole purpose to the telling of a story – that is, doing self. Tellers perform numerous social actions while telling a story and do rhetorical work through stories: they put forth arguments, challenge their interlocutors' views and generally attune their stories to various local, interpersonal purposes, sequentially orienting them to prior and upcoming talk. It is important to place any representations of self and any questions of story's content in the context of this type of relational and essentially discursive activity as opposed to reading them only referentially." (pp.381-382)

Clearly, definitions such as this draw attention to the *enacting* and *enabling* of personal narratives. Here, Holstein and Gubrium (2000) argue for approaches that consider content and process in one conceptual framework, as they claim;

"Narrative practice lies at the heart of self construction. It is a form of interpretive practice, a term we use to simultaneously characterize the activities of storytelling, the resources used to tell stories, and the auspices under which stories are told" (p.104)

Within the narrative practices of 'identity work' and confirming that identity is used in talk, Charles Antaki and Sue Widdicombe (1998) underscore the ethnomethodological emphasis of such work and practice, stating;

“...talk is seen in the context of everyday practices – such an approach sees talk in relation to category membership, and related ascribed (and rejected), avowed (and disavowed), displayed (and ignored) in local places and at certain times, and it does these things as part of the interactional work that constitutes people's lives” (p.2)

More specifically, narrative practices are discussed implicitly and explicitly in professional and early years contexts. Kim Atkins and Catriona MacKensie (2008) draw attention to the “practical and evaluative considerations” regarding identity and selfhood, where identity is not distant philosophy, but is a form of professional currency. This is seen in literature relating to the idea of career, which emphasises themes of individual agency and professional trajectory over time. It is in this context that identity work is conducted. Here, LaPointe (2010) identifies;

“...career identity as a narrative practice. Career identity is conceptualized as a practice of articulating, performing and negotiating identity positions in narrating career experiences” (p.1)

Career construction and related literature emphasises the need for individuals to define themselves in terms of how they practice and their plans for the future. This is defined as a narrative task, particularly in career counselling literature where there is an *explanation* for leaders' orientations, actions and plans as Jennifer Del Corso and Mark C. Rehfuss (2011) state;

“A narrative approach to vocational behavior and career re-conceptualizes individuals as storied, rather than viewing them as possessing static traits (Savickas, 2005). It embraces the context in which individuals' needs, interests, abilities and values arise. When individuals narrate their subjective perception of themselves and the world, they do so utilizing their own language and meaning system (Bujold, 2004).” (p.334)

Charles Bujold (2004) further emphasises the importance of “biographical-hermeneutical approaches to the study of career” (p.470) that account for the inherently creative nature of contemporary work. Bujold (2004) argues that;

“Career development, however, through the multiple decisions that it requires and the risks that it involves, and because of the individuals

unique ways of dealing with obstacles, unforeseen events, various circumstances, chance, and inner conflicts, can be considered, at least in part, as a creative process” (p.471)

Discussion of narrative practices within the context of career emphasises the need for individuals to manage an on-going narrative project in which individuals define their practice, future plans and professional identity. Instability requires on-going adaptation, and the theme of *adaptability* presents the idea of career construction as on-going practice, recognising the interplay of agency and structure within contemporary leadership. David J. O’Connell, Eileen McNeely and Douglass T. Hall (2008) state that;

“Adaptability has been proposed by Hall (2002) as a career metacompetency, which along with personal identity forms the core of a protean career. It is, at its core, the capacity to change, including both the competence and the motivation to do so (Hall & Chandler, 2005).” (p.249).

It can also be argued, as O’Connell et al (2008) note, that “Adaptability is a personal quality that is important in handling ambiguity, dealing with uncertainty and stress, and in working outside traditional temporal and geographic boundaries” (p.249). Similarly, Mark Watson and Mary McMahon (2012) claim, “career development needs to be conceptualized in terms of ongoing individual self-discovery given the changing and unstable nature of work” (p.762).

Consideration of the narrative practices of leaders engaged in sense-making and /or identity work provide some recurrent themes for this thesis. Perhaps unsurprisingly, one key theme is that narrative practices are experiential and situated. For example, Sylvia Gherardi and Barbara Poggio (2007) identify this in discussing their utilisation of experiential reflexivity through storytelling with a group of women leaders. Their position is informed by feminist practice and theory, and they highlight the effect their approach has in supporting women regarding gaining “different interpretative perspectives and new meaning configurations in order to face working life and organizational dynamics” (p.156). Here, narrative ‘work’ is associated with the activities of both identity work and sense-making. Similarly, Turner and Mavin (2007) turn to narrative, experience and sense-making regarding a

discourse of 'authentic' leadership to "enable understanding of the often unheard and messy individual experiences of "becoming" a leader" (p.377).

For leaders, narrative work is directed to the task of *relating to others*. In discussing relational leading, ethics and gender, Jennifer Binns (2008) argues for "Conceptualizing and enacting leadership as a relational practice, rather than as a heroic-individualistic performance" (p.600). Identity work is therefore a truly situated practice, where the term "...'embodied reflexivity' describes this ongoing project of self-knowledge and self-transformation underpinning relational leading." (Ibid. p.601). For Binns (2008), identity work must be relational in order to "firmly anchor self-care and ethical comportment to reciprocity, mutuality and connectedness" (p.604), echoing concerns of pedagogic and phenomenological material previously discussed. Ann L. Cunliffe and Matthew Eriksen (2011) similarly argue for "conceptualizing leadership as embedded in the everyday relationally-responsive dialogical practices of leaders" (p.1425). Lesley Curtis and Diana Burton (2009) emphasise this in an early years context, discussing the sophisticated, collaborative practices of an early years leader, arguing that narrative work is placed in the context of "being flexible, locally responsive and locally accountable" (p.287). Janet Holmes (2005 p.671) locates this work on a continuum between extremes of task talk and social talk. Here, Holmes (2005) identifies the use of "workplace anecdotes", used for "primarily social purposes, 'creating team' and strengthening in-group solidarity..." (p.675); and "working stories", being "more task-oriented stories...thus classifiable as closer to the 'business talk' or transactional end of the functional continuum, rather than to the social end" (p.675). She does, however acknowledge that "the dividing line is often fuzzy. Workplace narratives are often subtly multifunctional." (p.677). Overall, she recognises that all forms of narrative practice contribute towards identity work.

Literature identifies a number of specific functions or competencies within the idea of narrative practices. One key function is identified by Margaret Archer (2003), who points out the necessity of reflexivity to social interaction, especially identity work, arguing that;

“...any form of social interaction, from the dyad to the global system, requires that subjects know themselves to be themselves. Otherwise they could not acknowledge that their words were their own nor that their intentions, undertakings and reactions belonged to themselves.” (p.19)

Further, Charles Taylor (1985a) sees humans as unique in being self-evaluators and argues that this reflexive function is part of our existence as we articulate and seek to understand how we feel. A definition of self-reflexivity is offered by Michal Pagis (2009), who suggests the term

“...refers to the conscious turning of the individual toward himself, simultaneously being the observing subject and the observed object, a process that includes both self-knowledge and self-monitoring” (p.266)

Practical discussion of reflexivity and narrative actions is addressed in literature such as Carolyn Taylor and Susan White (2000), who underline the need for “the active processes of meaning making” (p.vi) in professional contexts. Robert Warwick and Douglas Board (2013) offer insights from their study of reflexive leadership practices, where reflexive practices must give “serious attention to the detailed patterns of anticipation, action, recognition and exclusion in making one’s workplace contribution” (Ibid. p.5). Secondly, they discuss the experience of thinking ‘close to the event’, capturing “...the ambiguity, fear, power relations, hope and the existence of multiple other paths...paying attention to paradoxical processes, including those of logic and emotion” (Ibid. p.5). Finally the idea that experience can be reworked⁵ is captured in Warwick and Board’s (2013) concept of “epistemic wake” (pp.5-6), where, as they explain;

“Immersed reflexivity draws attention to the game(s) that we are all participants in, games that we have a stake in - with something to gain and lose. These are games that change and develop over time. Looked at from a distance (or from long term memory) there is clarity and linearity, and stories become reified. At the time of happening things are confused, the rules of the game can make little or no sense, other than to those involved who have a stake in the process. Reflexivity can open up new, previously unsuspected interpretations, patterns or perspectives, some of which, in the social process of the game, extend the game’s meaning. Standing on the stern of a ship looking towards the horizon, one sees the wake as a clear stable white line that separates the sea. Looking downwards to the

⁵ My phrase

propellers the full churn and mix of the water and air becomes apparent. The straight line wake is not a thing but a transient pattern of flux.” (pp.5-6)

Elsewhere, authors such as Mathew Eriksen (2008) see reflexivity as opening up individuals to personal challenge and new understandings. Liz Jones (2010) sees this as thinking differently in the context of early years pedagogy (p.342). In this respect, reflexivity is not a self-contained practice, but one which is intimately linked to the activity of identity work and sense-making.

The function of sensemaking also connects to the theme of narrative practice, which has been examined in the unpredictability and complexity of organisational life. Karl E. Weick (1995) argues that;

“The concept of sensemaking is well named because, literally, it means the making of sense. Active agents construct sensible, senseable (Huber & Daft, 1987, p.154) events. They “structure the unknown” (Waterman, 1990, p.41)” (p.4)

In further explanation of the term, Weick (1995) discusses the “Seven properties of sensemaking” which are “Grounded in Identity construction... retrospective... Enactive of Sensible Environments... Social... Ongoing... Focused on and by Extracted Clues... Driven by Plausibility rather than accuracy” (pp.17-55). In other words, Weick (1995) describes a hermeneutic practice where “...the process of sensemaking involves enlarging small structures” (p.155). Individuals, then, identify, connect and configure a narrative which expands meaning and therefore understanding. Just as identity work is also emotional labour (Colley, 2006; Hochschild, 2003), sense-making work is focused by *commitment*, which, as Weick (1995) argues;

“transforms underorganised perceptions into a more orderly pattern. Before a commitment is made, all kinds of perceptions, experiences, and reasons are loosely coupled to the evolving situation...diverse cognitions become organised into those that support the action” (p.159)

Elsewhere, Weick (2012) identifies the organising role of narrative. He argues “a dominant story influences sensemaking and organizing” (p.143),

but then introduces a contradiction, perhaps reflecting a fear that this is too simple a claim, stating that;

“People are often thrown into pre-existing, organized action patterns. They experience the middle of a narrative but only the vaguest beginnings or ends. Without those boundaries people dwell in antenarrative. But that is where sense-making, organizing, and discursive devices make a difference.” (p.145)

Sense making, it can be argued, is Weick’s response to the challenges of narrating self where the situated nature of practice is far from obvious and does not present individuals with ready made ‘self-stories’. Further, Weick connects sense making to activities of storytelling and organizing, although *how* these connections work is not fully explored.

Other authors move beyond Weick in closely associating sense making and identity work. For Andrew D. Brown, Patrick Stacey and Joe Nandhakumar (2008), “sensemaking occurs in the context of individuals’ idiosyncratic efforts at identity construction.” (p.1035). Identity sense-making is as Amy Wrzesniewski, Jane E. Dutton and Gelaye Debebe (2003) define, firmly identified as a social, situated activity, with cues *used* in sense-making being received from others. Sense-making as Brown et al (2008) state, can be an activity that constructs individual identity and group identity, with narratives acting as social tools, creating “repertoires of understanding” (p.1053). Social sense making then has a complex relationship with individual identity work, so that, as Mills and Thurlow (2009) say, “the identities of those experiencing change influence the way in which they make sense of events and enact meanings.” (p.462). Just as *commitment* is identified by Weick as central to sense-making, a sense of *agency* is also a prerequisite according to Mills and Thurlow (2009) state: “we view agency in terms of the ability of an individual actor to enact meaning within a local site of sensemaking and organizing.” (p.461).

Explicit work on themes of reflexivity and sensemaking are under represented within early years literature. In one example, Manning-Morton (2006) discusses self-awareness in the context of professional practice with children, “valuing self-awareness in relation to the physical and emotional

dimensions of practice.” (p.42). In so doing, the value of practitioners’ experience in the process of continual professional (and identity) development are stressed, in that “connections” are made “between their experiences and children’s experiences” (Ibid. p.46).

This collection of literature, dealing with what I have termed narrative practices, has focused on concerns arising from previous sections of this chapter. I have identified that this work is undertaken in a dynamic, ambiguous context, where individuals undertake such work to provide a coherent base from which to act and relate with others. Further, narratives practices are understood as an activity emerging over time, and are the result of joint venture with others (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2008).

Themes identified have included those of adaptability (O’Connell et al., 2008), reflexivity (Pagis, 2009; Warwick & Board, 2013) and sensemaking (Weick, 1995, 2009, 2012) and inform this thesis by suggesting the need for a theoretical framework that considers time, coherence, ethical relationships and practicality.

Generally, this chapter has sought to inform the questions of this thesis set out in the first chapter, and summarised by the concerns about

- How do experiences become identity stories?, and;
- How do identity stories shape on-going practice?

This chapter has worked to contextualise these questions. I have positioned identity stories within the social practices of early years leadership, and connected this with ideas of identity, narrative, leadership and practice. I have explored the policy discourse of the early years and leadership within it and literature dealing with the topics that intersect with it, progressively focusing on the topic of identity in terms of profession, gender, the education and social care sector, early years, narrative and the practice of narrative identity.

In analysing these sources and issues, I have drawn out some key themes. These include the social and situated nature of narrative identity ‘work’, the importance of the temporal dimension, the effects of dominant discourse

upon the shaping of narrative identity and the idea of narrative identity as a hermeneutic task. In this context, I argue that narrative identity requires understanding as something that has both fixed and dynamic characteristics and as something connected to individuals' social practices and lifeworlds.

In the next chapter, I develop a specific theoretical lens in responding to the questions I set out in the first chapter and the insights summarised above. Further, I will utilise the hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur on the topic of self and narrative and will apply his work in new ways. Ricoeur addresses the themes or strands I have identified in this chapter, and offers rich resources for me to consider with regard to how identity stories relate to experience, how this occurs over time and how individuals make sense of experience. Finally, it will provide a framework for considering what narrative practices are deployed in narrating the self.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

This chapter explains the theoretical frame for the thesis that explores the status of the professional narrative self, how it is constructed and its relationship with talk of practices. In turn this influences the methodology employed later in the study and so the final discussion of findings. It looks beyond a literal reading of narrative texts about subjects such as “how I am at work”, seeking to understand ways in which these texts may be used to identify identity, selfhood and practice worlds, directly or indirectly following the questions set out in the first chapter of this thesis. Its starting point is the conceptualisation of narrative identity previously described as professional project, and it concludes with a metaphorical model that represents some of Paul Ricoeur’s ideas about three-stage mimesis, having discussed these. In this chapter, I describe the development of this model, paying attention to what was used and why. I explain that my aim in this chapter is not to create a synthesis or meta-theory; but to describe a lens most useful for answering the specific questions set out in the first chapter of this thesis.

In this chapter I construct a framework within which the study as a whole can be articulated, and provide an active point of reference for the methodology and discussion chapter that follows it. It discusses the way in which I conceptualise, select and relate a specific set of philosophical ideas.

The status of theory in this study is indicated by my use of language. Words such as ‘select’, ‘construct’ and ‘sketch’ indicate a particular – practical, dialogic and creative – relationship between the study and theory. Even the term ‘theory’ is used in its loosest sense, avoiding a definition concerned with predicting or generalising, and prescriptive rules. The term framework is more appropriate description for this chapter, as it allows for the development of something that orientates and defines and puts ideas in relation to one another but is also flexible enough to think and explore within. In some senses, it is a playful conceptual space for a hermeneutically orientated study. Consequently, the framework is useful within a broadly

interpretive and heuristic paradigm, concerned with issues of interpretation, understanding and exploration.

This chapter therefore enables a response to the questions set out in the first and second chapters of this thesis. I begin with the story of how I have come to construct, represent and use theory as I do. This makes the status of the material I present and the limits of its claims clear. Once I have set this out, I will then move on to describe a practical way of interpreting the data in this study.

The status of the framework

This framework will be used in interpreting the data of this study, but as part of a hermeneutic project, it is built on ways in which I understand and experience things generally. As such, the construction and articulation of this chapter, like the previous chapter, reflects my own understandings and experiences as I make interpretive decisions about what material best informs and makes sense of the questions I have set out. Once articulated, this theoretical framework will have the status of an interpretive tool or lens used in the next chapter, through which I can interpret the data of this study.

I have set out some of my own biography in the first chapter of this thesis that has described my own interest in interpreting practice and considering practical meaning. In the second chapter of this thesis, I identified themes such as reflexivity, sense-making and ethical relationships within literature, and indicated that there were resources at the intersection of narrative hermeneutics and parts of phenomenology that could be useful resources for this thesis (Gadamer, 1960/2013; Heidegger, 1927/2010). I therefore begin with general principles of hermeneutics before specifying the sort of hermeneutics most useful to this thesis in the work of Paul Ricoeur, from which I will select and adapt material.

A hermeneutic starting point

Like all large areas of study that cross disciplines, hermeneutics contains within it a wide range of meanings and purposes. In his introductory work on hermeneutics, David Jasper (2004) states that;

“The word hermeneutics is an English form of the classical Greek word *hermeneus*, which means an interpreter or expounder – one who explains things...Hermeneutics, then, is about ‘interpretation’ or even ‘translation’...” (p.7)

Popular discussion of hermeneutics tends to refer to the reading of (often biblical) texts that was not something that I saw the immediate relevance of for this study. However, literature previously discussed has included reference to professional life as narrative work, and as something to be interpreted. As such, I identify professional narratives in this study as ‘texts of the self’ that require an explanation and interpretation, being things that are fixed forms of dialogue which refer to social processes. Hermeneutics, then, is broadly defined by Jasper (2004) as an attempt to make sense.

Specifically, Charles Taylor (1985b) considers what hermeneutics can make sense of. He offers a definition that is applicable to the study of professional narrative identity;

“Interpretation, in the sense relevant to hermeneutics, is an attempt to make clear, to make sense of an object of study. This object must, therefore, be a text, or a text-analogue, which in some way is confused, incomplete, cloudy, seemingly contradictory - in one way or another, unclear. The interpretation aims to bring to light an underlying coherence or sense” (p.15)

How this is achieved is another thing. Many studies of narrative deal with the nature of language at a semantic level, and volumes of literature exist dealing with details of semantic structure, reference and so on. The hermeneutic project generally deals with understanding texts as a *whole*. It is a discipline that asks questions about meaning; relating terms of author, text and reader in a complex network of activities, seeing the text in relation itself and these other actors. It recognises, as Jasper (2004) stated, that the written word has an indirect relationship with intention (p.14) and forces the reader to ask questions about the relationships of the text just as they are

seeking to understand what the texts talks *about*, as in this thesis. Therefore, like this thesis, hermeneutic activity is concerned with reading, relating and understanding.

Moving closer to the hermeneutics of Ricoeur, whom I have identified as a useful resource taking forward key themes from the literature I have discussed, one begins to identify questions which implicate the author and reader, and speak to the ontological concerns of selfhood and identity addressed in this study. Tracing this movement in hermeneutics is beyond the scope of this chapter, but classic thinking on 'texts' has focused attention on a unified 'meaning of a text' with an identifiable beginning, middle and end. Aristotle's *Poetics* (trans. 1996) is such a reference point, and as such has strongly influenced western thought in this regard. However, modern applications of hermeneutics are the result of development of hermeneutic thought from classic Greek writing onward such as Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Vico and Spinoza towards ontological concerns of self-understanding, being, consideration of contexts, taking ownership of texts, and the relationship to historical enquiry (Dilthey, 1976). I have previously noted that the work of Heidegger (1927/2010) and his student Gadamer (1960/2013) in particular bring me closer to themes I shall work with in Ricoeur's writing.

These texts focus on a particular sort of starting point relating texts (as the traditional focus of hermeneutics) to the topics of doing, being and relating and therefore relate to the focus of this thesis. In other words, whilst the general orientation to interpretation and meaning making in hermeneutics generally is helpful, it is only when hermeneutics takes up questions about being and selfhood it becomes useful to this study. Similarly, the study of professional life as text is useful insofar as texts 'say' something about creating and sustaining stories about individuals in the context of doing. This is the one criteria for a suitable theoretical framework for this thesis.

Towards Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the self

Ricoeur provides a view of the self which deals with self-understanding and the relation of texts, dialogue and action which I have related to the questions in this thesis about professional talking and doing.. However, Ricoeur's work is prolific and complex and some selection is required in order that this chapter is suitably focused and practical. This is a challenge, as Ricoeur's published work is characterised by its volume, complexity and inter-connectedness to his own and other texts. Paul Kaplan (2008) notes that Ricoeur addressed fields as diverse as;

“...existentialism, phenomenology, philosophical anthropology, ontology, hermeneutics, biblical hermeneutics, philosophy of religion, philosophy of language, narrative theory, critical theory, philosophy of action, philosophy of history, moral philosophy, political philosophy and philosophy of law...” (p.1)

Farquhar (2010) provides a good summary of Ricoeur's hermeneutics, drawing out the array of influences upon Ricoeur's thinking and pointing towards the scope and complexity of his work:

“Throughout his life, Ricoeur engaged with a large number of ancient and modern philosophers. In developing his narrative theory, he was heavily influenced by Aristotle (poetics and mimesis), Augustine (temporality), Kant (productive imagination), Hegel (dialectic) and Heidegger (Dasein). Aristotle's muthos in Poetics forms the basis of Ricoeur's account of mimesis; Kantian productive imagination underpins his general theory of narrative; he extends Hegel's dialectic by emphasising the importance of conflicting positions and refusing any form of culminating point; and then, drawing upon Heidegger's Dasein, Ricoeur makes the connection between selfhood and care.” (pp.39-40).

Here, I read Ricoeur in order to identify those aspects of his work that speak to the topic of narrative identity and selfhood. Specifically, I shall discuss how Ricoeur's presentation of mimesis and discussion of the text feature centrally in this chapter as they specifically inform ways of considering the topics of narrative identity and selfhood. In order to identify these ideas in a meaningful way, I shall set their context within Ricoeur's work on narrative selfhood in the material that follows.

Ricoeur's philosophy and key themes

Ricoeur provides a way of viewing selfhood that is meaningful *and* practical by the way in which he constructs his hermeneutics of the self. His work speaks to issues of narrative meaning, subjectivity and relationships in time without offering simple answers or idealistic foundations. As such, Ricoeur offers resources for considering 'selfhood' as complex and unresolved stories, creatively tied to a world of relationships and cause and effect. Whilst his work is not postmodern or post-structural, by choosing to define identity in narrative terms, Ricoeur presents it non-foundational terms and, I argue, provides many points of connection with contemporary concerns about identity set out in the previous chapter. Further, Ricoeur's work achieves an important balancing act between subjectivity and situations of practice, between consideration of structure and abstract patterning and between the individual and the social. In broad terms, it is a suitable resource for the development of a theoretical frame for considering the questions of this study.

My initial focus regarding Ricoeur's approach to selfhood is his own description of what his philosophy was, taken from his chapter "*On Interpretation*" (Ricoeur, in Monteriore, (Ed.), 1983). On first view, it appears as a philosophy with three different and possibly conflicting ambitions:

"...it stands in the line of a *reflexive* philosophy; it remains within the sphere of Husserlian *phenomenology*; it strives to be a hermeneutical version of this phenomenology" (Ibid. p.187)

Taken superficially, Ricoeur seems to say here that he is interested in self-understanding (reflexivity), phenomenology (an often idealistic concern with intentionality and meaning-as-subjectivity through the unifying point of the ego) *and* hermeneutics (interpretation of texts). Nevertheless, Ricoeur (in Monteriore (Ed.), 1983) does reconcile these types of enquiry by altering all of them. He establishes his work as a *reflexive* philosophy in that it is concerned with

"...the possibility of self-understanding as the subject of the operations of knowing, willing, evaluating and so on. Reflection is that act of turning back upon itself by which a subject grasps, in a moment of

intellectual clarity and moral responsibility, the unifying principle of the operations among which it is dispersed and forgets itself as subject” (Ibid. p.124)

Ricoeur here announces his concern with self-understanding in the context of lived experience, connecting with phenomenological themes previously discussed. However, he rejects a definition of reflexivity as a view of the all-controlling ego looking at a “self-transparent object” (Ibid, p.3) that is the self, which is fraught with problems: after all, in this scenario, ‘who’ is reflexive? In the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (1931/2012), reflexivity is not about reflection ‘upon’ something external, but upon the flow of experience itself (Zahavi, 2002). Ricoeur moves beyond Husserl’s more extreme subjectivist phenomenology and builds on the work of both Heidegger (1927/2010) and Gadamer (1960/2013) to establish a different position. Heidegger’s work, which itself was a significant influence upon Ricoeur, extended the scope of philosophical hermeneutics beyond the study of texts and focused attention on the situated and temporal nature of existence through the concept of being, or *Dasein* (Heidegger, 1927/2010 p.41). In Gadamer (1960/2013) Ricoeur drew upon an orientation to the idea of *belonging*, where dialogue with others, in the context of human action, acts a background for meaning making. In doing this, Ricoeur’s hermeneutics;

“...rejects any claim of phenomenology to immediate, intuitive knowledge of the world grounded in full presence and subjective self-certainty. It also abandons any notion of a prelinguistic, meaning-conferring realm of consciousness for a philosophy that begins and ends with the fullness of language.” (Kaplan, 2003 p.22)

Instead, Ricoeur approaches reflexivity not via the substantive ego, but via a detour through the various marks and signals available to individuals through language as dialogue and text. Kaplan (2003) argues that he replaces a “...immediate, presuppositionless, intuitive grasping of phenomena by a hermeneutic phenomenology that imposes a direct, interpretive relationship to any given object of understanding” (p.19). In doing so, he directs our attention to a world that can be identified and ‘read’, a world that is open to enquiry, connected to situations of action. Henry Venema (2000) highlights the implication of this, which is that Ricoeur “...purge[s] subjectivity from idealistic and metaphysical interpretations.” (p.3).

This overview shows the relevance of Ricoeur's philosophy to this study in general terms. A summary of *how* Ricoeur manages to achieve what I have outlined is outlined, namely, in the foundations for and description of narrative identity. However, this requires further context, beginning with the connection Ricoeur makes between time and narrative through Augustine and Aristotle.

Introducing time and narrative: Ricoeur on Augustine's *Confessions* and Aristotle's *Poetics*

The role of narrative as it relates to experience and time is a central theme in Ricoeur's discussion of identity and selfhood. Given that this study focuses on how stories of professional experience relate to stories 'about' identity, it is important to understand Ricoeur's approach to this subject, and the wide-ranging resources from across different fields in order to summarise, critique and develop arguments. Some of these influences are carefully summarised by Ricoeur (1983/1990a) in *Time and Narrative (Volume 1)* as he seeks to address the fact that narrative is temporal and refers to a field of action (Blundell, 2010 p.85). Ricoeur (1983/1990a) begins with a discussion of Augustine's discussion of time, and draws on Aristotle's theory of muthos (enplotment) and mimesis to resolve some of the questions raised by Augustine. Some of his commentary on Augustine and Aristotle's work are important to this study as foundations for concepts I draw upon in making sense of stories.

Ricoeur draws upon Augustine's *Confessions* (trans. 1961) to identify one way in which "The world unfolded by every narrative is always a temporal world" (1983/1990, p.3). Ricoeur then discusses the inter-relatedness of narrative and temporal experience. This concern about narrative and the temporal broadly frames this study with particular reference to book eleven of *Confessions* (trans. 1961) on temporality.

Ricoeur takes from Augustine the theme that any attempt to understand time, and events in time, requires a narrative response (1983/1990, p.6). At its

most basic level, that is the position of this thesis – that understanding a professional life requires some sort of narration. Ricoeur draws attention to why narrative is able to do this by building on Augustine’s conception of the ‘threefold present’ in which he conceptualises time past, the present and the anticipated future and seeks to make them accessible philosophically. Ricoeur recounts Aristotle’s example of reciting a poem, in which one remembers lines spoken and anticipates lines yet to be spoken whilst in the present moment of reciting. At this early stage, one can identify a distinct phenomenological identification with this classic work, focusing attention upon what is experienced, remembered and imagined. In the present moment, the past is engaged through memory, the present through attention and the future is something expected (1983/1990, p10). Time is ‘measured’ through the activities of the mind: a *distentio animi* in which time is considered outside of chronological time, something underlined by Ricoeur as he identifies as a “phenomenological core” (Ibid. p.15) to Augustine’s work. These ‘modalities’ are presented not as randomly occurring, but as things engaged in by an attentive mind (Ibid. p.20). Ricoeur highlights the relationship between attention, memory and expectation (Ibid. p.20) where he finds active and passive elements, but the context is that of *engagement* and *action*, not simply the appearance of these things in the present moment. A problem remains which Ricoeur notes; that of how to consider time in his abstract mode of *distentio animi*.

This three-fold conception of time forms a foundation for Ricoeur’s ideas. Ricoeur notes that the threefold conception creates “spaces traversed by expectation, attention, and memory” (1983/1990, p.21) and “a measurable spatiality of a unique kind” (Ibid. p.21). Consequently, Blundell (2010) argues that Augustine provides Ricoeur with a model of “living action in time” (p.85),

Ricoeur uses Aristotle’s work to address unresolved paradoxes involved in bringing the past and future into the present moment. Aristotle provides a poetic and therefore narrative solution, which is seized upon by Ricoeur, as he claims that any attempts to understand temporal human existence should be through a *temporal* framework.

Ricoeur's solution, through Aristotle, is to focus on poesis (poetics) as the act of making, or an action that relates thinking and the world, involving transformation. In other words, poetics is an action that connects the inner and outer life in a reciprocal way (Ricoeur, 2003 p.291). Ricoeur draws on Aristotle's concept of poetics and identifies the concepts of *Mimesis* and *Muthos* which Aristotle associated with it; both of which are adapted and extended by Ricoeur and are key to this study. Mimesis is highlighted by Ricoeur (1983/1990) as a broad "all encompassing" (p.33) concept and the mimetic act of *making* is identified as a poetic action (Farquhar, 2010 p.43; Ibid. p.33) or "the active process of imitating or representing something" (1983/1990, p.33).

Muthos, or enplotment, is the act of giving a plot, or the organisation of events. In Aristotle, Ricoeur notes there is little definition between the terms mimesis and muthos, but Blundell (2010) notes "the act of giving a plot, is an act that occurs not in isolation, but within a pre existing world" (p.87), so recognising the ambition of mimesis to act upon life and to transform it, with enplotment being an action which does that. Enplotment, however, is not simply organising into a series, argues Karl Simms (2003 p.85), but is concerned with organising things into what Ricoeur (1983/1990) calls "an intelligible whole" (p.65), relating incidents in an intelligible way. Ricoeur (1983/1990) identifies Muthos (enplotment) as the 'what' of mimesis (p.36) and notes that "agents, goals, means, interactions, circumstances, unexpected results" (Ibid. p.65) are what are drawn together in enplotment.

By drawing on Aristotle's ideas, Ricoeur provides a way to approach threefold phenomenological time in Augustine's *Confessions* through the practical, meaning making activity of mimesis and muthos. What he establishes is a mechanism that connects narrating and the experience of time. This is important in relation to this study.

As I have previously noted, a theoretical framework that supplies only a compositional model of texts is not sufficient; the poetic intention of mimesis as active, transformational meaning making, relating experience and narrative, needs to be realised. Suffice to say that Ricoeur's (1983/1990)

discussion of Augustine and Aristotle's suggests the ways in which muthos (enplotment) reflects structures and patterns found in experience and dialogue. Ricoeur (1983/1990) also introduces the idea that mimetic enplotment makes use of "interweaving reference" (Ibid. p.32) between fictional and historical narrative, drawing attention to the transformations that practical experience undergoes as it is narrated, where stories are extended, edited or elaborated in enplotment. In other words, there are various relationships between experience and narration within mimesis that will be explored in this thesis.

The acting and speaking subject

Having established how Ricoeur's concepts form a foundation for the theoretical framework for this study, I now build on the preceding material in discussing the act of narrating, Ricoeur's (1990/1994) idea of the text and concepts of narrative selfhood. Following a discussion of the acting and speaking self, and the status of the text itself I will explain how the narrative product of enplotment can tell us something about narrative identity, something suggested by Henry Isaac Venema (2000) when he says;

"Thus, for Ricoeur the world of a poetic work not only provides a model of and for reality; it simultaneously provides a semantic model for selfhood through the fundamental connection between the inner self and the outer world" (p.89)

Ricoeur provides an orientation towards reflexivity and experience but one without idealism or resort to metaphysics. He achieves this through a hermeneutics of the self, building upon a unique 'joining' of contributions from Augustine on the experience of time and Aristotle on narration. Ricoeur's later work is concerned with understanding self as a text, the patterning of which can be interpreted to show how it relates to action. Ricoeur's arguments about narrative identity – and self as a text - bring together a number of themes established in his work (1981; 1983/1990a, 1990/1994, 2005).

Like Heidegger and Gadamer, Ricoeur is concerned with understanding and giving form to lived experience; following their work, his concern with narrative (and narrative identity) is far from narrative as a passive record of experience. It is in his idea of the “project of the person” (Ricoeur, 1960/1987 p.71) that Ricoeur’s study of identity is placed. It is this ‘project’ that focuses attention to the topics of acting, inter-subjectivity and dialogue, but Ricoeur’s arguments about the acting and speaking subject are built carefully upon foundations which *begin* with the semantics of language.

Key ideas about Ricoeur’s (1990/1994) work on the acting and speaking self can be seen as a ‘journey’ which begins with a contrast between two extreme positions on the self: he seeks to avoid both the ultimate foundation of Descartes *cogito* and also Nietzsche’s claim that the self is an illusion (1990/1994, pp.4-5). Ricoeur sets out “towards a hermeneutics of the self” (Ibid. p.16) through six studies that deal with different, but connected sites of enquiry that I identify as language, speaking and acting. Central to this enquiry is the question of ‘who’ does the speaking and acting. His aim is to show that “The self is implied reflexively in the operations, the analysis of which precede the return towards the self” (1990/1994, p.18) – in other words, the ‘self’ is not a ‘thing’ but is an on-going work and the actions of this work point towards the one who does the work. Ricoeur (1990/1994) manages to emphasise both the fragmentary nature of the self (p.19), *and* the way in which narrative brings it together. Ricoeur (1990/1994) seizes upon the “concreteness” (p.19) that human action provides over time as innovative actions are sedimented.

Ricoeur’s (1990/1994) first study deals with semantic approaches to identity, what he calls “identification” (p.27) of things spoken about. He looks to the semantics of language to find resources, or signposts towards the ‘who’ that is speaking. In semantics, he finds strategies that emphasise identification as sameness, such as classification. Importantly, he firstly establishes and moves beyond a very basic form of identification, which is the idea of a person having a singular, permanent designation - called the same thing in all of its occurrences - noting that this is an empty designation which tells us little (1990/1994, p.29). In his first study, he highlights other ‘indicators’ such

as personal pronouns, adverbs of place (here, there) and time (now, yesterday), but he still recognises that these things are still “indicators at large” (Ibid. p.31) and do not point us towards “the individual that each of us is” (Ibid.). The concern is still sameness, so that things (people) can be re-identified as the same.

At an early stage, Ricoeur (1990/1994) identifies the issue of persons being embodied – having a physical body. This may seem obvious, but he draws our attention to the strange quality of bodies standing for a set of “physical predicates and mental predicates” (p.33): he is able to identify the ‘problem’ of a thing that designates itself (Ibid. p.34). Additionally, he notes that these ‘predicates’ are ascribed *to* a person. He shows that ‘self’ understanding requires another: in this case, the other that does the ascription. At this stage, the ascription still says little about the ‘who’ which is Ricoeur’s concern; but as is often the case in the topic of professional identity, one may begin with labels and designations.

Ricoeur’s direction of travel leads him beyond what he calls “identifying reference” and towards the pragmatics of spoken language; or “utterances”. He still looks for “ties between the act of utterance and the subject of the act” (1990/1994, p.40) and begins to examine the theory of speech acts offered by John L. Austin (1975) and John R. Searle (1969), giving the example of promising as an example of a speech act. Speech acts contain locutionary elements (they say something about something), illocutionary elements (they achieve things in being said) and perlocutionary elements (they have physiological consequences). The term “I” connects all of these aspects, but this is still “a reflexivity without selfhood” (1990/1994, p.47) – and aporias remain regarding “the relation between a single speaker and the multiplicity of his or her utterances” (Ibid. p.50). The resources provided by the pragmatics of language are limited for Ricoeur, but he is able to note that the act of speaking introduces the idea of *inscription*. He draws attention to the way in which a person may be inscribed, giving the example of a birth certificate – which has the triple inscription of a proper name, a date, and a birthplace (Ibid. p.54). The pragmatics of language provides this idea of

inscription, and is connected by the “I”. From here, Ricoeur (1994) turns to a study of action to move from the inscribed “I” to the reflexive “I”.

Ricoeur’s (1990/1994) quest to find the reflexive “I” continues through a study of action theory. He asks, “What does action, we shall ask, teach about its agent?” (p.56). Further, he is able to build upon the idea of identifying reference and inscription to establish that theories of action establish “relations of intersignification” (Ibid. p.58) that guide meaning within a schema of action. This provides us with basic questions that may be asked as we search for a reflexive “I” such as why, what, why, how and when? To summarise, Ricoeur (1990/1994) examines the questions ‘what’ and ‘why’ as a means of finding out about the ‘who’ (p.59). Seen in the light of his ‘relations of intersignification’, this is an activity where he does not look for Descartes foundational ‘self’ but looks for references *to*, or marks *of* it using why, what, why, how and when. For example, he discusses the connection between the ‘why’ and the ‘what’ of a story: suggesting that the two are linked; so “describing is beginning to explain, and explaining more is describing better” (Ibid. p.63). His discussion also focuses on issues thrown up in the discussion of an action; *reasons* for acting, which in turn require an understanding of context and rules of interpretation (Ibid. p.64). He moves slowly towards a reflexive “I”, but again notes the limits of action theory to do this.

Continuing in Ricoeur’s (1990/1994) third study titled “an agentless semantics of action” (p.56), the idea of *intention* of the agent is discussed. A theory of action provides Ricoeur with a way of defining human events. He states, “What distinguishes action from all other events is, precisely, intention” (1990/1994, pp.74-75). Whilst intention becomes his focal point, Ricoeur (1990/1994) avoids crediting Descartes’ ‘internal entity’ in the context of intention by defining intention as “aiming of a consciousness in the direction of something I aim to do” (p.67) – and then requiring that this intention is only meaningful if *declared to another*; after all, who can know of intentions otherwise? In doing this, he begins to establish the value of narrative, and what is done in saying as a fruitful line of enquiry. Having stated the importance of the *declaration*, he introduces the criteria of veracity

(Ibid. p.72) – linking a claim to the speaker, and the idea of judgement. Issues of declaration and veracity are considered together in Ricoeur's idea of *attestation*, which he establishes as the link to the acting, agentic self (Ibid. p.73). These more specific ideas are also relevant to this study.

In his fourth study within his work on the narrative self, Ricoeur (1990/1994) moves from the idea of action to the agent itself. He underlines that it is ascription that “marks the reference of all the terms of the conceptual network of action to its pivotal point: who?” (p.95). He focuses on *voluntary* human action (Ibid. p.90); as this points to the intentions of the acting self. In this context, he cites Aristotle's idea of preferential choice, being the thing that makes an action open to praise or blame (Ibid. p.92) and so begins an on-going connection to the ethics of selfhood. He addresses the problem of intention and motive by recognising that search for motive in action is “indeterminable” but says finding the *agent* is an achievable task (Ibid. p.95). However, in finding the ‘who’, as I have noted, attestation requires a “genuine other” (Ibid, p.98). The veracity of attestation leads to a discussion of how agents can be held responsible for their actions, and looks to the judicial process to help us understand the criterion of “defeatability” (Ibid. p.100) as a basis of ascribing an action to an agent. Eventually, Ricoeur concludes that it is the discourse of “I can” that combines the phenomenology of attestation with the criterion of defeatability as claims appear in relation to others (Ibid. p.111). These points establish the basis for the discussion of selfhood in this thesis.

Ricoeur (1990/1994) introduces a fifth study which addresses the idea of “I can” or what he names the “power-to-do” which he states sits “at the junction of acting and the agent” (p.113). The omission, recognised here, is the temporal dimension as personal identity “can be articulated only in the temporal dimension of human existence” (Ibid. p.114): for Ricoeur, the attestation of “I can” is something that is an event in time, addressing others. A central role is established for narrative, but not without problems that must be addressed, Ricoeur states. His studies describe the dual nature of narrative identity, composed of sameness (*idem* identity) and *ipse* (selfhood; the acting and innovating ‘I’). Ricoeur identifies the idea of character as one

area where both *idem* and *ipse* overlap. Character, Ricoeur notes, is something that speaks to permanence in time (*idem*) but is laid down through a history of acting and innovation (*ipse*), so that “sedimentation tends to cover over the innovation which preceded it” (Ibid. p.121).

The relationship between *idem* and *ipse* selfhood is so central to Ricoeur’s narrative a short detour is necessary to define it. Ricoeur (1990/1994) presents *idem* and *ipse* as two necessary and connected aspects of selfhood, where *idem* signifies sameness which can be identified in space and time; with *ipse*, signifying the aspect of the self marking out individuality, and being the source of innovation. Firstly, *idem* speaks to the person who may be identified as the same on different occasions and by different people or as being the same as something; an identity required for identification of the individual in law, for example: *idem* is that which is recognised. Historical investigations into persons rely on this *idem* identity.

Yet Ricoeur presents the self as more than identification; if *idem* is the ‘what’ of identity, then *ipse* is the ‘who’. It is in *ipse* identity that he discusses the characterisation, changeability and relatedness of persons. *Ipse* identity is Ricoeur’s answer to the question ‘who does this’?. It is that part of identity that is influenced and changes over time, and is reconstructed in the light of events and as individuals relate to them. In his third book in the series ‘Time and Narrative’, Ricoeur (1985/1990b) associates *ipse* identity closely with narrative identity (p.246). Here, the *Ipse* self looks to the future and is a *becoming* self (Van den Hengel, 2002, p.84) – it meets new possibilities as it faces novel events, and so is more than the sameness of *idem*.

Ricoeur relates *idem* and *ipse* forms of identity. For Ricoeur (1990/1994), *ipse* identity performs the act, but *idem* identity takes responsibility for it (p.294). The creative *ipsety*⁶ identity of individuals responds to the categorisations and attributions of *idem* identity. Ricoeur also gives the example of ‘keeping one’s word’ where the momentary *ipse* relates to *idem* identified over time, and in doing so, highlights it as a relational and ethical qualification (it is something done for others). Farquhar (2010) argues that it

⁶ a phrase used by Ricoeur

is in this space between idem and ipse, between “personal identity and collective identity” (p.56) that identity is formed. Farquhar (2010) draws attention to the defining characteristics of action, language and inter-subjectivity in Ricoeur’s work, where people are “...embodied subject[s] embedded in historical and social projects.” (p.56).

In summary, Ricoeur noted the limits of isolated study of the semantics or pragmatics of language, but used them to highlight ideas about being identified, the need for an ‘other’ to understand identity and has noted the way in which identity may be inscribed. In a discussion of action theory, he moved closer towards his search for the reflexive “I” and has opened up the world of “relations of intersignification” (1990/1994, p.58) that may point towards it. However, in studying action and events, Ricoeur’s work highlights “What we wish to understand is not the fleeting event but rather the meaning that endures.” (Ricoeur, 1986/2008, p.75): in other words, his interest is in the significance of actions such as promising, and what they show us about the self. He addresses the issue of meaning by understanding identity in temporal terms, and says narrative addresses this both because of its ability to capture the idea of attestation and because it performs a mediating role. The idea of the mediating role of narrative is central to his subsequent material on narrative selfhood, and the focus for the theoretical framework here. In his sixth study, Ricoeur (1990/1994) addresses narrative identity directly. Specifically, he returns to the idea of emplotment previously taken from Aristotle, claiming;

[emplotment] “allows us to integrate with permanence in time in what seems to be its contrary in the same of sameness-identity, namely diversity, variability, discontinuity, and instability. Second, I shall then show how the notion of emplotment transposed from the action to the characters in the narrative, produces a dialectic of character which is quite clearly a dialectic of sameness and selfhood” (pp.140-141)

Ricoeur’s (1990/1994) claim is that narrative mediates things he has identified as important to identity, but which can appear contrary: sameness and diversity in action and sameness (idem) and innovation (ipse) in identity. It is that source of ipse activity that directs attention in the activity of what Ricoeur calls the *productive imagination*.

Ricoeur positions metaphor as an imaginative activity and discusses it across several of his works, particularly his *Rule of Metaphor* (1975/2003), which covers metaphor in poetics, rhetoric and discourse. My understanding of this concept comes from his discussion of metaphor in the context of discourse and not the technical studies of language that precede it. In narrative mediation, Ricoeur sees connections and transformations between things. He borrows the idea of the 'productive imagination' from Kant, and underlines his argument that self-understanding is fictive and textual: subjectivity relies on language, which in itself is symbolic. As Venema (2000) notes, imagination is a fictive activity that mediates, connecting sense and reference (Ibid. pp.39-42). Ricoeur presents this through his discussion of metaphor as something that Farquhar (2010) states, "creates tension between the literal meaning and the attributed meaning" of things and, importantly, becomes a way of redescribing the world (p.46) when taken at the level of discourse and not semantics (2003, p.5). Ricoeur (1986/2008) notes,

"Imagination is the apperception, the sudden glimpse, of a new predicative pertinence, namely, a way of constructing pertinence in impertinence. ...Imagining is above all restructuring semantic fields." (p.169)

For this thesis, the idea of "restructuring semantic fields" can be understood as relevant to the idea of changing ways of narrative understanding, and to the questions of the thesis generally. The work of the ipse self 'seeing things as', or the use of the metaphorical imagination also qualifies as a significant point of reference for this study: it offers a way of thinking about the work being undertaken in narrative, emphasising innovation and the creation of new meaning. Metaphor is useful to this study, as Venema (2000) states;

"Extended metaphors or fictions redemptively refer to reality by providing heuristic *models of and for reality*" (p.88).

Ricoeur emphasises the productive role of the imagination and metaphorical innovation: it is a productive force in the development of narrative selfhood. Elsewhere, Ricoeur (1986/2008) emphasises,

"...it is indeed through the anticipatory imagination of acting that I 'try

out' different possible courses of action and that I 'play' in the precise sense of the word, with possible practices." (p.173)

Metaphor is therefore positioned as a productive, imaginative *narrative* action. I have highlighted it here, because it sensitises and directs my own study into accounts of experience and identity. Ricoeur's concern with metaphor directs me to look for activity which 're-describes', transforms and mediates.

Summary: Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the self

"How do we understand identity through time? To answer this problem Ricoeur speaks of "narrative identity." The aporia remains but is rendered productive through the practical act of narrative construal in which we then understand ourselves as the subject of our acts." (Schweiker, 1988 p.28)

Ricoeur's narrative self is fragmented, elusive and temporal. It is a response to the experience of 'being' in time, as it pulls together disparate parts through metaphorical activity and emplotment. Importantly, narrative selfhood gives access to the reflexive self that Ricoeur seeks through ideas of inscription and attestation. Ultimately, Ricoeur presents narrative mediation as an *attestation* or claim that takes responsibility for action. In doing this, it 'makes sense of' the *dialectic* nature of narrative identity: self being sameness and difference, permanence and innovation. This extends to the idea of self and others, which Ricoeur (1981) captures in his use of Gadamer's phrase "the dialogue which we are" (p.62). Much of Ricoeur's discussion of selfhood is a description of narrative activity. Because 'self' is fragmented and not an absolute foundation, Ricoeur's attention is directed to self as a *narrative accomplishment*, so he looks to activity and marks that speak of the self, as he retains the status of the self as something shifting, fragmented and elusive.

Ricoeur's writings on the search for the reflexive "I" are significant to me in that I take from his work the idea that actions may be ascribed, and that human activity creates marks. Ricoeur's consideration of the schema of action introduces the idea of relations of 'intersignification' within the schema

of action. I add to these the ideas of emplotment as mediation and the use of the metaphorical imagination as organising and transformative actions between experience and stories. Lastly, the value of narrative as a place of attestation, or 'claim to be' is notable. Of attestation, Ricoeur (1990/1994) says,

"...attestation is fundamentally attestation of self. This trust will, in turn, be a trust in the power to say, in the power to do, in the power, finally, to respond to the accusation in the form of the accusative: 'It's me here'..." (p.22)

Of course, any position, such as this one, which argues for the *narrative* self will face criticism. In recognition of this, I note David Carr's (1991) discussion of the critique and rejection provided by authors such as Galen Strawson (2004) of the "psychological Narrativity thesis" (p.428). Here, Carr (1991) provides a defence of his, and ultimately Ricoeur's, position on the narrative self. It is not my aim here to summarise this defence, simply to say that the position offered by Carr (1991) and Ricoeur (1990/1994), reflected in this thesis is defensible.

Moving on, I shall build upon this idea of self as a narrative accomplishment that requires another. This will be achieved through a detour through the idea of a narrative 'text', which in turn relates to lived experience.

Self and text, text as a metaphor

Ricoeur's understanding of the self is as a narrative accomplishment. I have identified that hermeneutics in general is concerned with the understanding of texts and that Ricoeur sees his philosophy as a hermeneutic one.

Practically, narrative forms a large part of the data generated in this study in the form of transcripts, so how these are 'read' has immediate relevance.

However, in line with Ricoeur's work, the idea of text, when used metaphorically, goes beyond the literal idea of the transcripts this study will produce and helps conceptualise narrative selfhood.

As established, Ricoeur's hermeneutics is not a simple reading of a text to find some 'hidden' meaning. Rather, his focus on human action is an

important reference point for understanding a text. As previously noted, Ricoeur (1990/1994) builds an argument in which "... the notion of action acquires, over the course of the studies, an ever increasing extension and concreteness..." (p.19). In saying this, Ricoeur anticipates his arguments that human action can be seen to resemble a text in that it produces a sort of sedimentation. Common sense dictates that human beings do not simply 'reinvent' themselves every day, but actions build upon one another and actions are constrained or made possible by previous actions. Ricoeur (1986/2008) speaks of human actions, amongst other things, making a 'mark' in history (p.148). It is this idea of marks, or patterns are important in the development of my theoretical frame and methodology for this study. Ricoeur (1981) makes reference to the idea of 'marks' through discussion of Wilhelm Dilthey's work that considers how we gain access to an understanding of others. He says,

"...the life of others can be discerned and identified in its manifestations. Knowledge of others is possible because life produces forms, externalises itself in stable configurations; feelings, evaluations and volitions tend to sediment themselves in structured acquisition [acquis] which is offered to others for deciphering." (1981, p.50)

Elsewhere (1986/2008), he states,

"Social time, however, is not only something that flees; it is also the place of durable effects, of persisting patterns. An action leaves a 'trace', it makes its 'mark' when it contributes to the emergence of such patterns, which become the documents of human action." (p.149)

The idea that human action can generally be manifested, or that it creates 'marks' of some kind is a step closer to a relationship between text and self that I build this thesis upon. Here, Ricoeur makes the connection between two epistemologically different domains; action/discourse and text.

Consequently, the 'world' of action/discourse is of a different 'language' and order than the text. His work articulates a relationship between the two on a philosophical level, specifically through his explanation of the mimetic spiral. However, before consideration of this mimetic spiral, I now complete the journey made towards 'selfhood' through semantics, pragmatics, action theory and narrative by making the connection to the text.

The connection made by Ricoeur between speaking and the text is one of meaning. This is also true of the connection Ricoeur (1986/2008) has previously made between action and speaking, where he speaks of the objectification of action;

“This objectification is made possible by some inner traits of the action that are similar to the structure of the speech act and that make doing a kind of utterance.” (p.146)

Ricoeur’s (1986/2008) study of action focuses on the way in which action as an event occurs at a particular space and at a particular time. Because of this, human events have a meaning that is determined by ‘where’ and ‘when’. Human actions therefore have characteristics that can be configured into the idea of a text. Ricoeur (1986/2008) uses the word “exteriorisation” to describe these characteristics;

“I therefore give the word *meaning* a very broad connotation that covers all the aspects and levels of the intentional exteriorization that, in turn, renders possible the exteriorization of discourse in writing and the work” (p.77)

He provides a more straightforward explanation in claiming that;

“If, in fact, human action can be narrated, it is because it is always already articulated by signs, rules, and norms.” (Ibid. p.57).

This is a world of “signs, rules and norms”, and is discussed as such by Ricoeur (1986/2008), who draws on Heidegger’s concept of *Dasein*, or ‘being in the world’ (Heidegger, 1927/2010) to articulate this idea. Specifically, Ricoeur (1986/2008) draws attention to the way in which *practical experience* may be meaningful;

“The first function of understanding is to orientate us in a situation. So understanding is not concerned with grasping a fact but with apprehending a possibility of being.” (p.64).

The situation of action makes possible speech and discourse. Ricoeur returns to Austin’s (1975) discussion of speech acts previously noted, and the idea that speech may be *locutionary* (it identifies something about something, but an action may also be identified), *illocutionary* (it achieves things in being said and is a type of saying, just as there may be types of action such as promising) and *perlocutionary* (it has physiological

consequences, just as actions have consequences in the world).

Consequently, discourse builds upon action in expanding its' meaning, so Ricoeur (1986/2008) states;

“Discourse is always about something. It refers to a world that it claims to describe, to express, or to represent.” (p.141)

Whilst meaning and understanding are critical components of action and discourse. It is the consideration of time that connects action to discourse and in turn, to the text. In recognising that action is to be understood, Ricoeur (1986/2008) establishes that action is not a ‘self-contained system’ as *meaning* escapes it. He states, as noted before; “What we wish to understand is not the fleeting event but rather the meaning that endures.” (p.75). In summary, action requires interpretation, it is a site of discourse; but being located in time, discourse is lost without some form of inscription, thus connecting with text.

Ricoeur has already indicated the metaphor of the record as the social inscription of human action (1986/2008, p.157). He asks;

“What in effect does writing fix? Not the event of speaking, but the 'said' of speaking, where we understand by the 'said' of speaking that intentional exteriorization ... It is the meaning of the speech event, not the event as event.” (Ibid. p.142)

Distanciation

Ricoeur notes that a text captures meaning through the process of *distanciation*. Distanciation, according to Simms (2003), “is the effect of being made distant from the producer of a text and the cultural conditions under which he or she wrote” (p.39). For Ricoeur, meaning is *amplified* as one moves from language to discourse to a textual work through the operation of distanciation. As language becomes discourse it shows a “primitive type of distanciation” (1986/2008, p.74).

Ricoeur moves from language, to event, to meaning. *Distanciation* is what occurs in this journey. In Ricoeur’s (1981) comments on “The hermeneutical function of distanciation” (pp.131-144), he builds the ‘primitive’ form of distanciation noted in the move from language to discourse by identifying

four characteristics of distancing proper. Firstly, discourse as text loses referential functions of the event and “writing renders the text autonomous with respect to the intention of the author” (Ibid. p.139). In my methodology chapter, I argue that whilst the creation of texts objectifies and creates distance from the initial dialogue, it does so in a qualified way.

Secondly, discourse as text is submitted to a form of “codification” or “style” (Ibid. p.138) relating it to the writer. Stylisation is discussed by Ricoeur (1986/2008) where he notes that a work is longer than a sentence, and is something that is composed. Ricoeur (1986/2008) uses the phrase ‘work’ precisely because he refers to the process of labour involved in imposing a form to discourse and submitting it to genres (p.77); in composition, it undergoes a stylization itself as it is composed (Ibid. p.78). This is a further distancing, but it is one that is viewed positively by Ricoeur;

“Stylization occurs at the heart of an experience that is already structured but that is nevertheless characterised by openings, possibilities and indeterminacies” (Ibid. p.78).

The act of composing a textual work brings with it a stylization, adding to the distancing, but it is this distancing that also ‘opens up’ the work to meaning, echoing the transformation Aristotle speaks of in his *Poetics*.

Thirdly, Heather M. Tan et al (2009) suggest a text does not ‘hide’ a person’s psychological intentions (p.8), rather, Ricoeur (1981) says that “to interpret is to explicate a sort of being-in-the-world which unfolds in front of the text.” (p.140).

Finally, the distancing created by fixation of dialogue in text is a “distancing of the subject from himself” (Ibid. p.141), which enables the text to be “the mediation by which we understand ourselves” (Ibid. p.141). In these four characteristics, Ricoeur boldly rejects romantic ‘searches’ for the self in a text and embraces the alternative: to understand the world that is projected from the text and to locate oneself in relation to that. A text, or work, is therefore not the same as action, or discourse, but I suggest one part of its value is that it ‘carries forward’ and expands meaning of those

things. Meaning is not duplicated; it cannot be, given the different epistemological states of action, discourse and text, but meaning is progressively 'opened up' to the reader through poetic operations such as emplotment. What Ricoeur establishes is less of a 'blueprint' for the self than a 'world' to understand and for the reader to see themselves in front of.

The idea that subjective experiences can become, in some form, accessible to others is an exciting possibility for this thesis. I have established, in broad terms, the idea of a text as something that is a fixation of dialogue. This otherwise unremarkable claim becomes charged with meaning in the context of Ricoeur's work on narrative selfhood. In this context, I am able to use the idea of a 'text' as a set of objectifications (words, marks) of narrative activity, both imaginative innovation and historical sedimentation. I conceptualise it here as a form of map, a tool I shall describe in the next chapter, to be used with participants in developing lines of enquiry about the self. I recognise that what has been established is basic: an idea of a text that can be interpreted, a space that can be read. Therefore, in order to furnish this study with a workable theoretical frame I need to give that 'map' or space some form and content.

Mimesis within the textual space

"[T]ime becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence." (Ricoeur, 1983/1990, p.52, author's emphasis)

Texts⁷ will be the site of my enquiry. In this study I define them as those objectifications or projections of a professional 'world' made in writing and image. More than this, the text is a *space* where things are projected and encountered, helping participants see themselves in new ways. My conceptual foundations for my methodology are then based in Ricoeur's way of seeing the text *in relation* to a professional world, its action and discourse; and the act of seeing and receiving. It is a space for certain sorts of

⁷ Transcripts, memos and visual material seen as text, as discussed in the methodology of this thesis.

encounters: between myself and participants, between participants and professional worlds, between participants and potentialities.

I see the 'text' as operating as a map or conceptual space with activity, marks and sedimentations within which things can be read, traced and encountered; all things that make it an ideal site for enquiry. Further, I wish to show that this space contains narrative activity and sedimentations reflecting idem and ipse aspects of Ricoeurian identity. I argue the most appropriate way of doing this is to use the model of the hermeneutic arc or spiral that Ricoeur adapted to explain connections between the text and the world of acting and speaking. This model is based upon ideas of mimesis and develops a concept called the hermeneutic arc; I shall discuss the way these two ideas are built upon by Ricoeur in his adaptation of the mimetic arc or spiral.

Ricoeur's discussion of mimesis was drawn primarily from his reading of Aristotle's *Poetics* (*transl.* 1996). To recap; mimesis is defined broadly as a poetic act of making, or the operation of thinking upon and transforming the world, seen as "the active process of imitating or representing something" and organisation of the events (1983/1990, p.33). Human activity itself is seen as poetic, involving "the arts of composition" (*Ibid.* p.34). However, hermeneutic literature over hundreds of years has needed to 'make sense' of this poetic transformation; and has focused on the 'problem' of using texts to make sense of texts, something Ricoeur has addressed, as he adapts his own model of hermeneutics.

From the hermeneutic circle to Ricoeur's mimetic spiral

Early hermeneutists such as Friedrich Schleiermacher (1998) emphasised the necessity of the role of the interpreter and context in the task of hermeneutics. Antony C. Thiselton (2009, p.6) discusses that in the era of early hermeneutics defined by Schleiermacher, Spinoza and others the idea of the hermeneutic circle represented the need to deal with an understanding of the parts and the whole of the text. Whilst this helped to establish the

discipline of hermeneutics, it posed a circular problem that Charles Taylor (1985b) described this way;

“What we are trying to establish is a certain reading of text or expressions, and what we appeal to as our grounds for this reading can only be other readings. The circle can also be put in terms of part-whole relations: we are trying to establish a reading for the whole text, and for this we appeal to readings of its partial expressions; and yet because we are dealing with meaning, with making sense, where expressions only make sense or not in relation to others, the readings of partial expressions depend on those of others, and ultimately of the whole” (p.18)

Ricoeur’s solution to the circular ‘problem’ in traditional hermeneutics was through adapting the phenomenological emphasis of Heidegger and Gadamer. In his discussion of *Dasein* (being-in-the-world) Heidegger (1927/2010) emphasised the idea of fore-structures or “pre-phenomenological” world (p.102) that individuals draw upon in their being. Gadamer’s (1960/2013) work suggested that we understand the whole from our preconceptions about the meaning of the parts, and that understanding involves interpretation (Ibid. p.358). At the most basic level, this can be related to the word in a sentence, but the ‘whole’ has commonly been taken to include contexts, personal and cultural. Ricoeur builds on Heidegger’s argument in *Being and Time* that suggests a ‘backward and forward’ movement in relating inter-dependant parts and the whole. In contemporary hermeneutics, the role of pre-understanding, or provisional understandings is expressed by Thiselton (2009) as “doubt as a dialogue partner” (p.13) who uses the analogy of constructing a jigsaw puzzle by drawing upon “...some working assumptions about what the piece might represent and how it fits into the larger picture” (Ibid. p.13). Thiselton (2009) further notes that;

“preliminary understandings and responsible journeys into fuller understanding leave room for renegotiation, reshaping and correction in the light of subsequent wrestling with the parts and the whole” (p.15)

What is emphasised here is that repeated movements into a text bring with it new encounters, connections and understandings, as opposed to some form of vicious circle. I argue it is the relating of the text to the ‘world’ of the actors and author that powers these encounters, connections and understandings

(1983/1990). Ricoeur can therefore be seen as having expanded the idea of the 'whole' text. He achieves this by the process of meaning-connection I have previously summarised, where Ricoeur (1976) states that "if discourse is produced as an event, it is understood as meaning" (p.73) as both share the same "sphere of meaning" (Ibid.). Explanation proceeds from the event, and is completed in writing. Understanding and explanation, are not the distinct activities of the natural (explanation) and human (understanding) sciences, but become "the distinct poles of a developed dichotomy" (Ibid. p.74). Ricoeur (1976) gives the following illustration;

"we explain something to someone else in order that he can understand. And what he has understood, he can explain to a third party. Thus understanding and explanation tend to overlap and to pass over into each other" (p.72)

Ricoeur (1976) adds to the dialectic of understanding and explaining the third state of comprehension. He sets out a process which begins with explanation, moves to understanding as a "naïve grasping of the meaning of the text as a whole" or a guess (p.74) and proceeds to comprehension which is "a sophisticated mode of understanding, supported by explanatory procedures" (Ibid.), arising from movement between the dialectic modes of explanation and understanding as discussed by Tan et al (2009, p.11). In his discussion of historical understanding, Ricoeur (1983/1990) draws our attention to this productive relationship;

"Understanding is not the subjective side and explanation the objective one. Subjectivity is not a prison and objectivity is not our liberation from this present. Far from conflicting, subjectivity and objectivity reinforce each other." (p.98)

In proposing a dynamic hermeneutical model, Ricoeur adapts the hermeneutic circle. It is appropriate to describe this new way of relating texts to wider contexts, and the back-and-forth movement as a *hermeneutic arc*, with complementary roles for explanation (with a more structural, descriptive role) and understanding (relating to the world of being). Tan et al (2009) explain; "He uses the term hermeneutic arc to describe this movement back and forth between a naïve and an in-depth interpretation" (p.9). Ricoeur (1976) identifies *this* complex relationship between explanation and

understanding as the process of interpretation, being “the name of the dialectic between explanation and understanding” (p.73).

Ricoeur’s mimetic spiral

The proposal of a hermeneutic *arc* that contains both explanation and understanding (Ricoeur, 1986/2008, p.160) forms the basis for his description of a *threefold mimetic arc*, or *spiral* (Ricoeur, 1990, p.72) which emphasises the dynamic relationship between the world of action / dialogue and text. It is this mimetic spiral which is the focal point of my own theoretical framework, as it addresses the questions asked in this study: summed up in ‘how do experiences turn into stories’, and ‘how do stories shape worlds of action and dialogue?’.

I have described a set of related ideas that fills the textual ‘space’ or map. The mimetic spiral and what it represents is important here. Mimesis engages with the world and transforms it; at its centre is the act of configuration, which draws upon and transforms Heidegger’s (1927/2010) pre-narrative “fore-structures” (p.102) in the world of action and dialogue. Davenport (2012) presents this as the relation between primary and secondary narratives;

“The mimetic thesis: the basic human capacity to make secondary narratives, including nonfictional or broadly historical accounts and fictional stories, is *derived from* our experience in living out primary narratives...” (p.94)

It is important to note what sort of relationship mimesis establishes between action/discourse and the text. Specifically, Ricoeur identifies with an Aristotelian view of mimesis as a creative representation. Ricoeur (1983/1990) warns that;

“If we continue to translate mimesis by 'imitation', we have to understand something completely contrary to a copy of some preexisting reality and speak instead of a creative imitation. And if we translate mimesis by 'representation'...we must not understand by this word some redoubling of presence, as we could still do for Platonic mimesis, but rather the break that opens the space for fiction.” (p.45)

The 'space for fiction' described by Ricoeur can be seen as a space for exploring possibilities; appropriate for a study of narrative selfhood. As Ricoeur (1983/1990) notes;

“...mimesis functions not just as a break but also as a connection, one which establishes precisely the status of the 'metaphorical' transposition of the practical field by the Muthos [emplotment].” (p.46)

The metaphorical activity of mimesis (applied in the direction of the text, or from the text to the world of action/dialogue) is possible because *the spheres of action/dialogue and the text exchange resources*. Ricoeur (1986/2008) does not confuse either sphere, but places them in a typically dialectic and productive relationship;

“The function of the project turned toward the future, and that of the narrative, turned toward the past, here exchange their schemata and their grids, as the project borrows the narrative's structuring power and the narrative receives the project's capacity for anticipating.” (p.173)

The nature of the exchange gives this study a framework within which to understand connections between texts and action. Ricoeur (1983/1990) describes text as the “what” of mimetic activity (p.36), but in following the backwards-forwards movement between explanation and understanding I shall step back to examine the movements and connections of the mimetic *system* itself as this also has a impact upon my methodology.

Mimesis₁ Mimesis₂ and Mimesis₃

Ricoeur's mimetic spiral has three phases which he designates as mimesis₁: prefiguration, mimesis₂: emplotment, and mimesis₃: refiguration. Together, these act as a mimetic system, connecting action and stories. Ricoeur's (1986/2008) own claim is that;

"What is at stake, therefore, is the concrete process by which the contextual configuration mediates between the prefiguration of the practical field and its refiguration through the reception of the work. It will appear as a corollary, at the end of this analysis, that the reader is that operator par excellence who takes up through doing something –

the act of reading – the unity of the traversal from mimesis 1 through mimesis 3 by way of mimesis 2." (p.53)

Mimesis ₁: prefiguration.

The prefiguration stage of mimesis relates to the 'world' of action and discourse. It is this world that participants in this study will reflect upon and narrate as I ask them questions about how they practice and what and who they are as a professional. Ricoeur has emphasised the prefiguration phase of mimesis following his adaptation of the 'romantic' hermeneutic circle, drawing upon Heidegger and Gadamer to stress the importance of fore-structures or prejudice which guide the interpretation of action (Ricoeur, 1986/2008, p.70). Without the inclusion of mimesis₁, my own study would not be equipped to deal with the relationship between stories of self and experience. Ricoeur (1986/2008) gives us an indication of the resources that prefiguration provides to the subsequent activity of configuration of narratives in stating;

"The composition of the plot is grounded in a preunderstanding of the world of action, its meaningful structures, its symbolic resources and its temporal character." (p.54)

I have previously summarised Ricoeur's (1990/1994) own comments about the "intersignification" (p.58) of the schema of action, in which the terms *why*, *what*, *why*, *how* and *when* are constructed in relationship to one another and enable the understanding of 'what is going on' in any given situation. It is an understanding of the practical experience of this intersignification that furnishes individuals with a schema for representation in stories. The structures (such as spaces, designations and relations) and symbolic resources (such as discourses, cultural artefacts and language itself) pre-structure the configuration of stories, providing what can be described as a set of raw materials or maps for them. In short, Ricoeur (1986/2008) states that " ...social reality is fundamentally symbolic." (p.161), and presents a metaphor of prefiguration as he talks about the "...symbolic resources of the practical field" which enable narration "because it is always already articulated by signs, rules, and norms." (p.57).

Ricoeur's explanation of Mimesis₁, as prefiguration, draws upon his discussion of the search for the reflexive self in his text *Oneself as Another*. Elsewhere, Ricoeur (1986/2008) emphasises "...we could say that a meaningful action is an action the importance of which goes 'beyond' its relevance to its initial situation." (p.150). Meaning in the text, therefore, is not something imposed on a blank page and self contained within the text; it is partly an explanation called for by the pre-existing meaning generated in action and discourse; Ricoeur (1986/2008) explains that;

"That means that, like a text, human action is an open work, the meaning of which is 'in suspense'. ... In the same way that the meaning of an event is the sense of its forthcoming interpretations.." (p.151)

Action therefore prefigures the text by providing meaning that escapes the situation and has 'forward momentum' in the mimetic spiral. There is an understanding (noetic) in action that may be configured by in the text. As Ricoeur (1986/2008) states,

"I should like to speak here of the noematic structure of action. It is this noematic structure that may be fixed and detached from the process of interaction and become an object to interpret." (p.146)

Part of what is understood about action, which prefigures narrative, is that it occurs in time. Perhaps more significant that all the characteristics of experience or action, time *calls for explanation* or sense-making as things become dislocated, distant and opaque. Its sequential nature also provides the basis for *plot* in configured narratives.

Mimesis₂: Configuration

"With mimesis₂ opens the kingdom of the *as if*" (1983/1990, p.64)

Ricoeur presents mimesis₂ as the critical phase of his mimetic spiral, as it is the narrative configuration of action and dialogue. It is here that the 'text', consisting of multiple narrative strands, is constructed and maintained. Configuration is perhaps critical because it has a set of very unique

functions. Firstly, it is unique in that it is related, but distanced from the world of action and dialogue it is in relation to. As Ricoeur (1986/2008) suggests,

“In my view, the text is much more than a particular case of intersubjective communication; it is the paradigm of distancing in communication.” (p.72)

I have already noted that the function of distancing is viewed productively by Ricoeur, rather than being removed from the ‘real action’. It is a form of fixation of dialogue that represents or objectifies in some way experience and talk. This feature of dialogue allows an individual to become an object to themselves, as described in the alternative pragmatic tradition by G.H. Mead (1934/1967), in his writing on self and the social emergence of meaning. It creates a text to be read, and we shall see, to be used in on-going action. Immediately, a dialectic relationship is established between the experience of being-in professional worlds and stories of acting and selfhood. Ricoeur consistently sees dialectic relationships as productive, where characteristics of lived experience (being incomplete, being temporal and so on) are in relationship with a text which projects them but is more than a copy.

Configured texts have a unique status exactly because they are not duplications of experience or action. Consequently, the act of configuration is an inherently creative act, where the text mediates experience in time; something Ricoeur (1983/1990) calls *emplotment* “the faculty of mediation” (p.53). Further, Ricoeur identifies three ways in which *mimesis*₂ mediates between pre-understandings (*mimesis*₁) and a return to action (*mimesis*₃). Firstly, configuration mediates as individual events are transformed into a story with an identifiable ‘thought’. They can be followed as they are a “meaningful whole” (1983/1990, p.67). Secondly, configuration mediates by creating ‘concordant discordance’ (Ibid. pp.65-66) where elements are brought together and related; thirdly, configuration mediates experience over time as it represents a “synthesis of the heterogeneous” (Ibid. p.66) where mediation involves a synthesis of otherwise fragmented events, experiences and claims; synthesis being part of the work of the productive imagination (Ibid. p.68). In other words, configuration supports meaning making, as Schweiker (1988) states;

“[Ricoeur’s] claim is that the enplotment of action renders existentially productive the paradoxes of experienced time.” (p.27).

In configuration the relationship between historical and fictive narratives goes beyond mediation into synthesis. In this respect, Ricoeur presents a nuanced argument; by identifying the act of configuration (*mimesis*₂) as a literary activity, Ricoeur (1983/1990) brings together fictional and historical narratives “without regard for the differences which concern the truth claims of the two classes of narrative.” (p.64). In this sense, it is also mediation and synthesis of historical and fictional narrative to create a text that represents history, current experience and what is anticipated or hoped for. Rather than producing a confused text, what is represented is the creative synthesis that is the narrative self: not a simple reporting of ‘events’ or a list of ambitions or aspirations, but a presenting together of both. The ‘test’ of this comes in *mimesis*₃, where stories are judged probable, where Ricoeur (1986/2008) recognises elsewhere that “The text is a limited field of possible constructions.” (p.155).

The configured text also qualifies as a unique resource for Ricoeur – and this study – as it has “a sedimented history whose genesis has been covered over” (1983/1990, p.68). Ricoeur points to the effect of temporality on identity narratives, where an account of the self is related to events over time. Ricoeur (1983/1990) discusses the issue of consistency over time, and what he calls ‘character’ (p.121) which is offered as a unique overlap of *ipse* and *idem* identity, or sedimentation and innovation. It gives the text an interesting quality, where the sedimentation of events, established identities, habits and so on raises questions about the innovation that preceded it. I note that what is offered is not a genealogy or audit trail from established narrative elements ‘back’ to innovative *ipse* selfhood, but it offers a heuristic line of enquiry, something I take up with participants in this study.

Mimesis₃: Refiguration

“...to understand is to understand oneself in front of the text.”
(Ricoeur, 1986/2008, p.84)

Ricoeur's mimetic spiral here connects the world of action and discourse and the text. In connecting mimesis one, two and three together in an on-going spiral, Ricoeur reconnects the text to the world of action and discourse in a project that has forward momentum. It acts as the trajectory of mimesis₂, in which is the text 'distanced' from the referential situation, by re-connecting its objectification with the world it represents. In other words, the text becomes available for re-appropriation by the reader, which I note may include the subject of the narrative. Ricoeur (1986/2008) contextualises as follows;

“By 'appropriation,' I understand this: that the interpretation of a text culminates in the self-interpretation of a subject who thenceforth understands himself better, understands himself differently, or simply begins to understand himself. ... self-understanding passes through the detour of understanding the cultural signs in which the self documents and forms itself....reflection is nothing if it is not incorporated as an intermediary stage in the process of self-understanding.” (p.114)

In mimesis₃, the overall purpose of the mimetic spiral is presented as self-understanding. The text is still the focus of the activity, but mimesis₃ emphasises the act of reading or reception. Given the stress Ricoeur has placed on the need for another in defining the self, configuration of a narrative selfhood *without* reading or reception is selfhood not realised. Ricoeur (1986/2008) notes that “ 'The actualized' text finds a surrounding and an audience; it resumes the referential movement – intercepted and suspended – toward a world and toward subjects.” (p.115)

However, whereas mimesis₂ presented a poetic break (enabling the operation of metaphoric imagination and consideration of possibilities), mimesis₃ represents another sort of opening or possibility when this 'reading' of the text encounters the world once again. Here Ricoeur (1983/1990) notes,

"mimesis₃ marks the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader; the intersection, therefore, of the world configured by the poem and the world wherein real action occurs and unfolds its specific temporality." (p.71)

The term *intersection* is of interest here as what is received in refiguration is not a duplication of past events. The work of mimesis₂ in transforming actions and dialogue prefigured in mimesis₁ have been held together, related, explained in relation to an anticipated future and have been given a 'followability' through configuration. As a result, another productive dialectic is established by Ricoeur, this time between the newly configured text and the receiving 'world' of the hearer as stories have the potential to shape the events and dialogues they speak about.

Refiguration therefore continues the "referential movement" (1986/2008, p.115) of the mimetic spiral, and as it does it is a source of innovation, but also of sedimentation. By reconnecting the text to the world of action and dialogue, a dynamic feedback spiral is established, but one that moves forward in time. Individuals are able to see themselves in 'front of' the text (1986/2008, p.84), rather than hidden within or behind it, as the world receiving the text is for Ricoeur partly a phenomenological world; to receive the text is to experience it to think differently as a result. This is presented by Ricoeur (1986/2008) as a powerful productive experience;

"And it is indeed through the anticipatory imagination of acting that I 'try out' different possible courses of action and that I 'play' in the precise sense of the word, with possible practices." (p.173)

This is playfulness within limits. Just as the text is "a limited field of possible constructions." (1986/2008, p155) in mimesis₂, play with practices is required to 'play by the rules' of the world of action and dialogue. Ricoeur (1986/2008) notes the schema of action which applies here applies the test of there being intelligible or meaningful accounts with " ... conditions of acceptability ..." (p.185). In other words, a text as a total fiction, with no connection to previously sedimented events or identifications is not one that has forward momentum in the mimetic spiral; it will not be received, incorporated and told.

Summary / towards a methodology

The methodology for this study set out in the next chapter is built upon the ideas summarised here. Rather than providing a general introduction to the phenomenological hermeneutics of Ricoeur, I have selected and summarised key ideas from his work that are applicable to my work. Such a selection does not present the full range of his ideas, or the depth of his thinking in relation to any of them. In that respect, it is a pragmatic reading with methodology in mind.

I have introduced and located the hermeneutics offered by Ricoeur. I established the way in which he built upon and adapted the consideration of time offered by Augustine, and the treatment of narrative offered by Aristotle. Having introduced these, I then discussed Ricoeur's narrative selfhood, beginning with a review of what I called 'the acting and speaking self'. Having begun in the semantics of language, through the pragmatics of spoken language (noting resources from each) I summarised his consideration of the use of action theory in understanding the reflexive self. Each of these summaries indicate theoretical resources, or guideposts for this study in relation to narrative selfhood. Further, I highlighted the role of distancing and of the productive role of metaphorical imagination, as connected to narrative selfhood. From this point, I was able to develop a model for my own theoretical frame, introducing Ricoeur's own adaptation of traditional or romantic hermeneutics in his proposal of the mimetic arc. Finally, in explaining the three phases of this model, showing how they incorporated themes and ideas previously established in the 'journey' towards narrative selfhood and the idea of the text, I establish the framework for my own study.

I previously used the metaphor of a conceptual space, or map for the idea of the text. Ricoeur defined the text as the whole of a work, and I have previously shown how he expanded our conception of it by positioning it as the projection of a *world*. For the purposes of this study, I have defined it as what is 'fixed' or exteriorised in dialogue: the methodology chapter will identify these as transcripts and images of arrangements made with sketches. It is into this space that I place the spiral of mimetic activity I have

summarised. In doing this, the space of the text contains both innovations (associated with the ipse self) and sedimentations or marks (associated with idem identity). In the next chapter, I will explain the work I have done with this spiral to adapt it to into a practical tool for analysis.

Finally, given I have focused on the reading of texts, it is appropriate to note the implications of this theoretical frame for its reading. In their discussion of Ricoeur's hermeneutics, David Carr, Charles Taylor and Ricoeur himself (1991) consider how experience should be 'read'. They argue;

“...the task of doing justice to the world has the value for us of being a hermeneutic key to the reading of phenomena.” (pp.160-188).

It is one thing to construct an expanded view of the text as a conceptual space, containing active and passive elements, but I note that any reading of the text should 'do justice' to the participants in this study, ensuring the text I create meets the test of being intelligible or meaningful to readers, including participants whose 'worlds of action' prefigured it (1986/2008, p.185). How this will be achieved will be described in the next chapter. Finally, I will remain open to insights these texts will present to me, as someone who initiated this study following a consideration of my own experience and desire to make sense of it. In other words, as Ricoeur (1986/2008) stated;

“ ...the theory of 'understanding' becomes a structure of being-in-the-world. The moment of 'understanding' ..is the projection of our ownmost possibilities at the very heart of the situation in which we find ourselves. ...For what must be interpreted in a text is a proposed world that I could inhabit and wherein I could project one of my ownmost possibilities.” (p.83)

Chapter 4: Methodology

Ontological and epistemological starting points.

In the previous chapter, I developed a theoretical framework for this study, drawing on Ricoeur's work. In the process, I made a number of ontological and epistemological commitments relevant to my methodology. Michael Crotty (1998) emphasises the importance of making these sorts of connections in research, in relation to clarity and claims. Crotty (1998) says;

“Justification of our choice and particular use of methodology and methods is something that reaches into the assumptions about reality that we bring to our work...It also reaches into the understanding you and I have of what human knowledge is, what it entails, and what status can be ascribed to it.” (p.2)

This chapter makes connections between these commitments and my methodology, so I write this chapter ‘looking back’ on the development of my methodology and methods, so that I may reflect on the actual process I have undertaken and emphasise my own reflexivity within it.

Drawing upon Ricoeur, I begin by describing characteristics of the ontology that supports this methodology. Ontological statements address the question of *being*, or *ways of being*, and in that sense my whole study is ontological in orientation. I argue that in Ricoeur's narrative hermeneutics, the terms identity, narrative and practice have multiple ways of ‘being’. I shall look at each of the terms in illustrating this argument, then highlight the practical implications this has.

Firstly, Ricoeur presents *identity* as being more than ‘one thing’. This is seen in his categorisation of idem (fixation, identification) and ipse (innovation, imagination and acting) self: it presents and can be experienced in different ‘modes’.

Further, Ricoeur's conception of activity (which I have generally called *practice* in this study) also has more than one ‘mode’. Activity is discussed by Ricoeur (1986/2008) in terms of experience or individual phenomena, but he

also recognises a material, embodied, historical 'world' which is the *site* of experience, relationships and which goals are constructed in relation to. Activity, therefore, is experience *and* event.

Additionally, Ricoeur's selfhood is a narrative one, and is also multi modal, as is illustrated in discussion of the three phases of Ricoeur's mimetic spiral in the previous chapter. In configuring narrative identity, individuals explain and account for their relationship with activity in the world. Narrative is something that is situated in time and space, and is something that can be fixed as a text, but it configures using fact *and* fiction, present experience *and* anticipated future. It is orientated towards the individual *and* the world of the reader (through the act of appropriation). Therefore, narrative selfhood has a complex ontological status. In summary; identity, practice and narrative – all key terms for this study - display different characteristics at different times. I have utilised these features in my methodology.

Ontology relates to what things (like narrative) can *be*, and is related to the concept of epistemology, which identifies how things can be *known*. Just as the key terms of my study – self, practice and narrative – can be different, or be seen in different ways, they can be *known* in different ways and can refer to multiple things at one time. For example, in everyday terms, we know that when someone talks about what they do, their talk 'reveals' things about who they claim to be. Narratives of practice and of identity are therefore multi-faceted and can be encountered in different ways and can make reference to each other. I as suggest, I have utilised this in the methodology that follows: an encounter with talk of practice can refer to knowledge about selfhood, and talk of selfhood can refer to knowledge about practice. As I discussed in the introduction, I am interested in the relationship between the experienced 'world' of practice and participants' identity narratives. In so doing, I am utilising the idea of narratives being 'multi-modal' in that I wish to look at texts about self, and see relationships to practices, and vice versa.

Utilising these principles commits me to a view about self about self as multi layered, contingent and changeable. The text may be seen as a *live map*: a body of stories curated by an individual to do the practical work of explaining

life. Self-narratives are part of a live project of the self, which involves remembering and projecting, but can also be fixed as texts. Being part of an on-going project, *and* making poetic use of references in the world of experience, narratives of self can potentially provide both profound *and* practical interpretations; although they will never be definitive and resist fixed categorisation, as Ricoeur (1990/1994) himself argues.

There are implications for methodology regarding how narratives can be captured, read, and received. In this thesis, I argue that narrative selfhood and identity can be interrogated as part of a hermeneutic process by moving backwards and forwards amongst points on the 'live map' and so create unique readings of it. From a hermeneutic perspective, narrative (like all objects or phenomena in an interpretive paradigm) offers many 'readings', as the reader is brought into the process of meaning making. Objectivity on the part of the researcher is impossible, but one may achieve *distanciation* from the text (Ricoeur, 1981) and see texts in new ways, as will be discussed.

I will also demonstrate that the status of the enquiry and the findings is not as abstract as Ricoeur's philosophy may suggest. The theory frame chapter alluded to the metaphor of a narrative field or space, in which narrative marks and patterns exist. Although my study is clearly about *understanding* and *interpreting* participants' accounts, the nature of the questions which seek to understand connections between configured identity narratives and talk of practices, along with the methodology I utilise means that the resultant analysis is far from a purely literary one. In the theory framework chapter, I indicated that being and knowing is multi-modal, so just as stories may be understood as a whole, in depth, and in terms of effect on the reader, they are also understood structurally (Ricoeur, 1983/1990). The implications of this are important; whilst discussion of the structure of narratives does not attempt to establish causal relationships within the data in the manner of positivist epistemology, I will operationalise Ricoeur's assertion that texts 'point' or refer to symbolic resources which in turn refer to events, people and objects situated in place and time. In other words, I will show how the narrative space I have conceptualised became a sense-making 'map' in my

methodology, suggesting connections and relationships which may be read in multiple ways.

Constructing a methodology requires a translation of the metaphysical commitments of ontology and epistemology into a practical form. My aim here is to take abstract ideas and to investigate them in practical ways with participants. This chapter explains the methodology I constructed, how I selected participants and how I addressed ethical issues. In addition, it discusses specific methods I used and my approach to analysis.

A narrative, sense-making methodology

This is a study of narrative identity and my theoretical frame identifies my approach as broadly hermeneutic, which is, a process of understanding and interpreting narratives. I therefore needed to develop a methodology that supported the 'back and forth' movement that Ricoeur (1981) described between phases of explanation and understanding (p.221).

In identifying my study as narrative, I acknowledged the long (and broad) tradition of narrative research, characterised by seminal work from authors such as Donald E. Polkinghorne (1998), D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly (2004) and Catherine K. Riessman (1993), each emphasising different aspects of what counts as 'narrative'. These points of reference are also noted in chapter two of this thesis (see p.63). From an early stage in the design of my study, I realised that I was not working with rigid definitions of what counted as 'narrative'. In setting out to understand identity 'stories', I knew from my own experience (personally and through programmes like the NPQICL) that professionals rarely presented fully formed 'identity stories'. I wanted to remain open minded as to what could 'count' as a narrative, unlike as Catherine K. Riessman (1993) notes, scholars "[who] treat narratives as discrete units, with clear beginnings and endings, as detachable from the surrounding discourse rather than as situated events" (p.17). I saw some value in this summary, insofar as any narrative units need to be meaningful. However, I resisted any focus on lengthy, fully formed stories (as I suspected

these would just not exist) and aimed to remain sensitised to smaller coherent and meaningful segments of narrative which made sense in relation to other small narrative elements. This in part is a response to Watson (2009, p.428), who discusses James Phelan's (2005) critique of "narrative imperialism" (p.210), or the tendency to reduce narrative to simplistic models; and Galen Strawson (2004), who rejects the universal recognition of, or search for "narrative coherence" (p.447). I too am concerned to counter those who see only the 'grand narratives' as worth studying, and I felt that more sensitive and subtle identification of narrative elements was needed. Fundamentally, I wanted to reflect the characteristics of conversations as (initially) ethnographic encounters, where narrative is not presented as a speech, but is a complex, subtle interplay of partial and emergent meanings (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Consequently, when I talked of 'narrative' I sometimes found myself using the phrases '*narrative elements*' to refer to these, and '*big stories*' to refer to larger, discrete extended narrative segments which often only came late on in the series of conversations after much joint work with narratives. I have maintained this distinction in this thesis.

With such considerations in mind, a hermeneutic study into sense-making narratives of identity and practice demands more than a casual treatment of narrative as data. As my focus is on expanding and understanding sense-making and reflexive practices of early years leaders, I selected a methodology that put me in on-going *conversation* with individuals. It would have been possible to obtain 'texts' about narrative identity and how it happens through something like a documentary study – but I quickly identified that use of artefacts such as diary entries (for example) in isolation is limited in the extent they reveal reflexive *processes* themselves and I wished to incorporate into my methodology the idea, from Ricoeur (1990/1994), that our stories are shaped and enriched as we encounter 'others'. Quite apart from anything else, the individuals I wished to speak to – early years leaders - would be more familiar with interactions 'in person'. I also identified that sense-making (or hermeneutic) work dealt with subtle meanings and involved a process of *becoming* aware. Sense-making is a

dynamic, revisionist activity, and in that spirit, narrative material may be offered, revised and seen in multiple ways: it addresses the complexity of lived experience. I identified that use of conversation draws attention to the aspect of 'giving an account' of ones' self to another in ways that even a reflective diary does not. Conversations offered the advantage of being *encounters*, enabling individuals to see themselves as another do, and conversations offered the opportunity to be sensitive to the emotional and embodied (Pagis, 2009), or somatic (Hamill, 2013) contents of meaning that can find their way into stories if acknowledged and explored together. The methodology also developed fundamentally from the claim that human beings are narrative experts, who from birth learn to make sense of lived experience in a social, storied way (Bruner, 2003).

Narrative methodology is an intensive way of working with stories, and makes demands on the researcher to 'live' with narrative data (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As such, time is a significant factor and one needs to work with individuals over an extended period. However, I note that there is not a simple relationship between 'talking more' and gaining insight into the questions I am asking in this study. Extending conversations over time, as I shall show, also brought with it a set of challenges around managing beginnings and endings of conversations, maintaining narrative 'threads' and ensuring participants' psychological well-being was addressed.

In positioning and designing my study around hermeneutic principles discussed in Chapter three, I remained mindful that this was one of a range of potential approaches to the study of professional identity and practice in an early years context. Specifically, I reflected that many of the sources which influenced early years policy and guidance reviewed in chapter two were developed within other research traditions more aligned to disciplines such as education (e.g. Moyles, 2006; Sharpe et al, 2012) or public management (e.g. HM Treasury, 2002). However, I also recognised the need for a study based upon hermeneutic principles which would examine the experiences, practices and forms of narrative identity in the sector. As such, I was confident there was a place for my study with this distinctive approach.

So far I have identified a methodology that utilises extended and on-going conversations, and have highlighted the benefits that this brings in terms of experiencing stories. Sense-making and reflexivity moves beyond simply hearing accounts of individuals' professional identities, and into a space where the researcher works with participants to reflect together on the strategies they employ in constructing and using these narratives. Such a process needs careful management to maintain focus and purpose, in addition to clarity about what such an approach involves.

A co-constructive, reflexive and progressive methodology

My methodology is a joint process of sense-making: I invited participants to explore and make sense-of their own accounts of 'being themselves' in talk and practice. My role was to engage with and support participants' explorations of their narratives. Rather than sessions being a series of questions and answers, the process was *co-constructive* in that I had a role in bringing alternative perspectives, or questions to participants. Although his own work alludes to the author and reader of a text, Corinne Squire (2008) presents Ricoeur's work as similarly co-constitutive:

"Ricoeur (1991) described this intersection of the life-worlds of speaker and hearer, or writer and reader, as an inevitable, constitutive characteristic of narrative." (p.49)

This methodology required a high degree of reflexivity on my part to ensure that the nature of the intersection I wished to create was empowering and productive for participants. My role in co-construction of on-going conversations therefore needed to *expand* participants' meanings, rather than *impose* my own meanings. Here, I was mindful of feminist scholarship – summarised in chapter two – which drew attention to the influence of power, representational politics and dominant (masculine) disciplines and perspectives in shaping identity. I was therefore mindful of the need to expand participants' understandings and not impose mine, or confirm 'gendered' labels given to participants. Therefore, I was clear about my remit

to facilitate a mode of talking *together*, and engagement in authentic and non-directive sense-making for participants.

I did not assume that participants would come to sessions with me with 'fully formed' self (or practice) narratives, and I knew that conversations over the course of a year would take time to form, or even resist formation. There were also practical issues related to supporting co-construction in terms of building on ideas and maintaining momentum between sessions with participants.

Using the term 'narrative' may be seen to imply that there would be only one mode or form of talk used by participants in conversation with me. Instead, I anticipated that over the course of a year and five extended conversations of approximately two hours each there may have been many ways of talking which reflect many possible ways of thinking. I shall set out the ways in which this is reflected in my methods later on in this chapter, but I anticipated the need to support diverse ways of conceptualising, reflecting and constructing narratives, so that any resultant 'narratives' were formed through a critical, reflexive process. Whilst there was structure used in sessions, the methodological challenge for me was to be aware of, and sensitively use ways of talking together that encouraged times of rigorous examination of some narratives and allowed them to think and talk in different ways. Further, like Turner and Mavin (2008), I wanted to ensure that my work with narrative functioned as "as a means of reflexive learning" (p.382).

Linda Finlay (2002) provides a useful discussion of reflexivity in research practice, something she describes as "Negotiating the swamp" (p.209). Finlay (2002) contrasts early "realist tales" of careful observation and scientific credentials with the emergence of "confessional tales" (p.210) focusing on awareness of fieldwork challenges. Contemporary challenges highlighted by Finlay include "how intersubjective elements impact on data collection and analysis" (Ibid. p.211) and the positioning of the researcher. She recognises that the participatory paradigm of social research has considered issues of reflexivity and specifically recognises the value of

intersubjective reflection in a situated and negotiated space (Ibid). In particular, her work sensitised me to the need for researchers and participants to “engage in cycles of mutual reflection and experience.” (Ibid. p.218).

Emily C. Bishop and Marie L. Shepherd (2011), with a focus on narrative, consider the necessity of reflexivity in “ethical, rigorous qualitative research” (p.1283), look at the role of narrative reconstruction and at the limitations of research methodologies. They stress that an examination of personal subjectivity is required, and that processes of reconstruction (in my case, between what is said in dialogue and my own and any subsequent work with participants) should be subject to careful and critical consideration. Bishop and Shepherd (2011) summarise their argument as follows:

“Hindsight and distance do not allow us to see the past. They provide a different view of this. Our memories are obscured and reimagined over time. Narrative epistemology helps us to open up a space where we can recognize this; where we can be explicit about what we can and cannot achieve through our reflexive accounts. To improve our research skills and to enhance researcher transparency, we should continue to be reflexive; to throw as much light as possible onto our research practices and processes. We should do so, however, within a framework that more overtly recognizes the reconstructed nature of our reflections.” (p.1290)

In the light of this, my challenge both within sessions and beyond them was to be aware of ways in which narratives would be heard, represented and reconfigured. This chapter records how I responded to this challenge, through discussion of my use of visual artefacts, journaling and multiple sessions with participants.

In preparing for the multiple sessions with participants, I drew on Ian Burkitt’s (2012) discussion of emotions in the reflexive process, where he argues for their central role in perceptions, responses and monitoring of action and choices (p.458). I noted his suggestion to “...put emotions back into the context of social interactions and relationships in which they arise” (p.459) because of their importance in relating to self and others. His argument for a greater awareness of emotions which themselves inform reflexivity therefore shaped my approach.

In relation to research done in organisations, and regarding management, Alvesson et al (2008) provide a helpful summary and consideration of ways forward with regard to the literature on reflexivity in a field near my own. They distinguish between reflexivity in terms of the embodied process of encountering research subjects and reflexivity in the writing up of research, where they cite J. Kevin Barge (2004). Following a comparison of reflexive strategies in organisation and management research, the Alvesson et al (2008) identify four approaches to reflexivity, the first being “multi perspective practices” (p.482) which utilise multiple paradigms in recognition of the limits of individual ones. The authors question whether using multiple flawed paradigms is any better than using only one. Secondly, Alvesson et al (2008) point to “multi voicing practices” (p.483) in reflexive research. Here, the relationship of the field researcher and ‘the other’ is considered, particularly in relation to the construction of research texts. The authors cite Stewart R. Clegg and Cynthia Hardy (in Clegg et al, 1996) stating that, ironically, efforts to focus attention away from the researcher may in fact lead to more attention on them. In relation to “positioning practices” (Ibid. p.484), their third category, authors refer to Gergen (1991) in drawing attention to the co-construction of knowledge. Here they identify the possibility that the researcher may be constructed as heroic. Finally, Alvesson, Hardy et al (2008) point to “destabalizing practices” (p.485) utilised in pursuit of reflexivity. This approach is characterised as drawing on Jacques Derrida (1984) and Michel Foucault (1972-1977/1988) in showing how knowledge ‘projects’ reflect political privileges and how reflexivity in that context is concerned with highlighting the lack of others’ reflexivity. In this case, Alvesson, Hardy et al (2008) note the irony of such an undertaking can itself produce “an authoritative text” (p.489).

My own approach to reflexivity, given this useful guidance, was to avoid problems associated with limited reflexivity (such as inability to track ‘shifts’ in meaning away from participants intended meaning) and to produce new insights (where reflexivity supports questions about how and why narratives are produced and used).

A progressive and purposive methodology

My methodology has an anticipated arc of its own and was implemented through a set of practical activities illustrated in Figure 1. I was clear with participants that I had a purpose for our conversations over the course of the year and supported their move from naïve, structural or ‘surface’ presentations of narratives through to highly reflexive sense-making work on the practices around the shaping and deployment of those narratives. This was reflected in the topics for the first four sessions which I introduced to participants when we first met, so they were able to identify how conversations would connect and build (see Figure 2).

This practical structure, which moved from surface presentation to reflective sense-making, reflected the hermeneutic movement identified by Ricoeur from structural to depth understandings of texts, as individuals first become conscious of narratives (or the lack of configured narratives) before they are able to consider them reflexively. This is an important movement that I sought to manage carefully, as participants varied in the extent to which they recognised and elaborated narrative elements, or were able to view them reflexively.

Whilst I wished to move *towards* reflexivity, I recognised that some participants needed to spend time identifying, encountering and becoming more fully conscious of their identity stories and their associated narratives. This was not simply a cognitive process, as I was inviting busy leaders of integrated early years services to recognise and question what were potentially emotive, contradictory or confusing self-narratives. Sessions had the potential to be therapeutic for participants, even though they were not designed to be ‘therapy’ in the psychotherapeutic sense. This was a journey with a purpose; and one that moved forward at a meaningful and manageable pace for participants.

Figure 1: An overview of data configuration and refiguration in this research process.

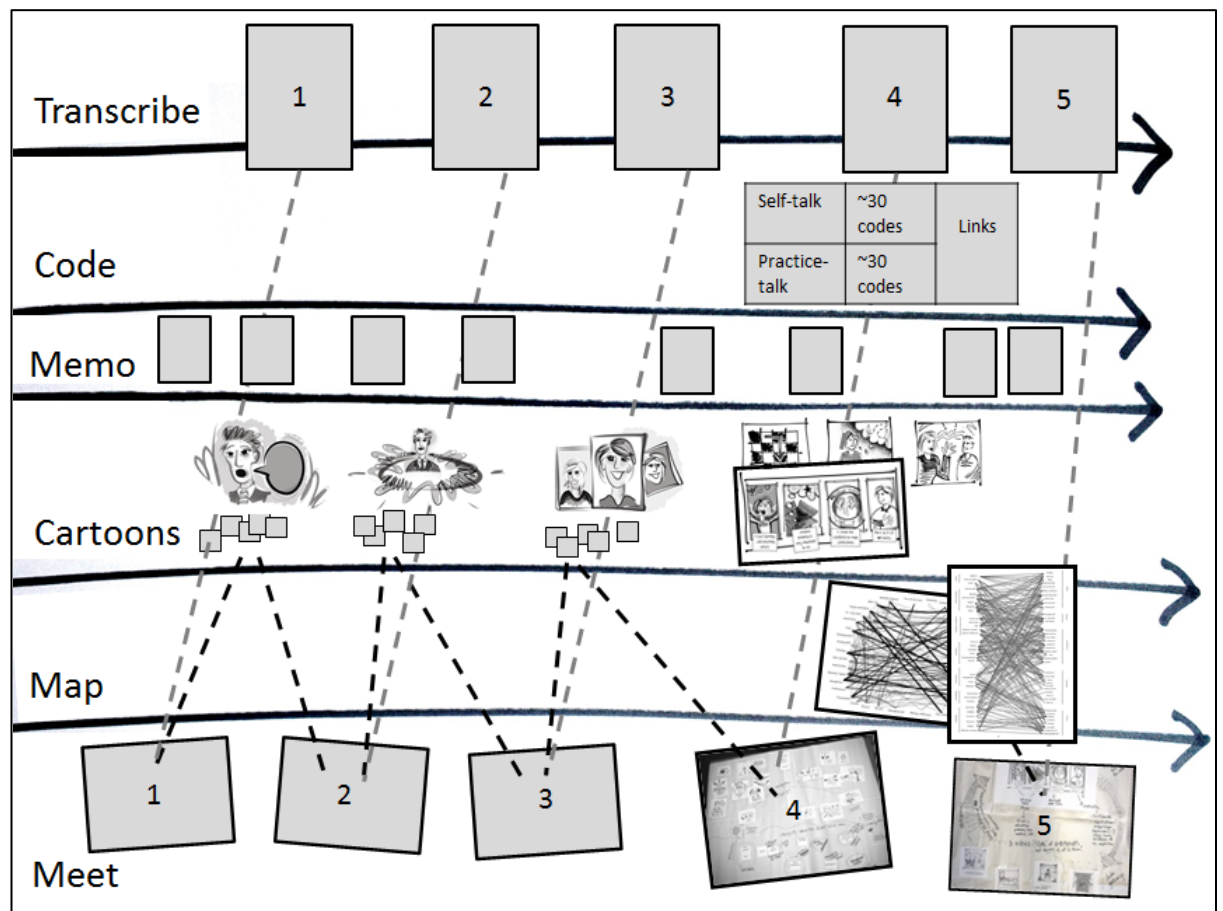
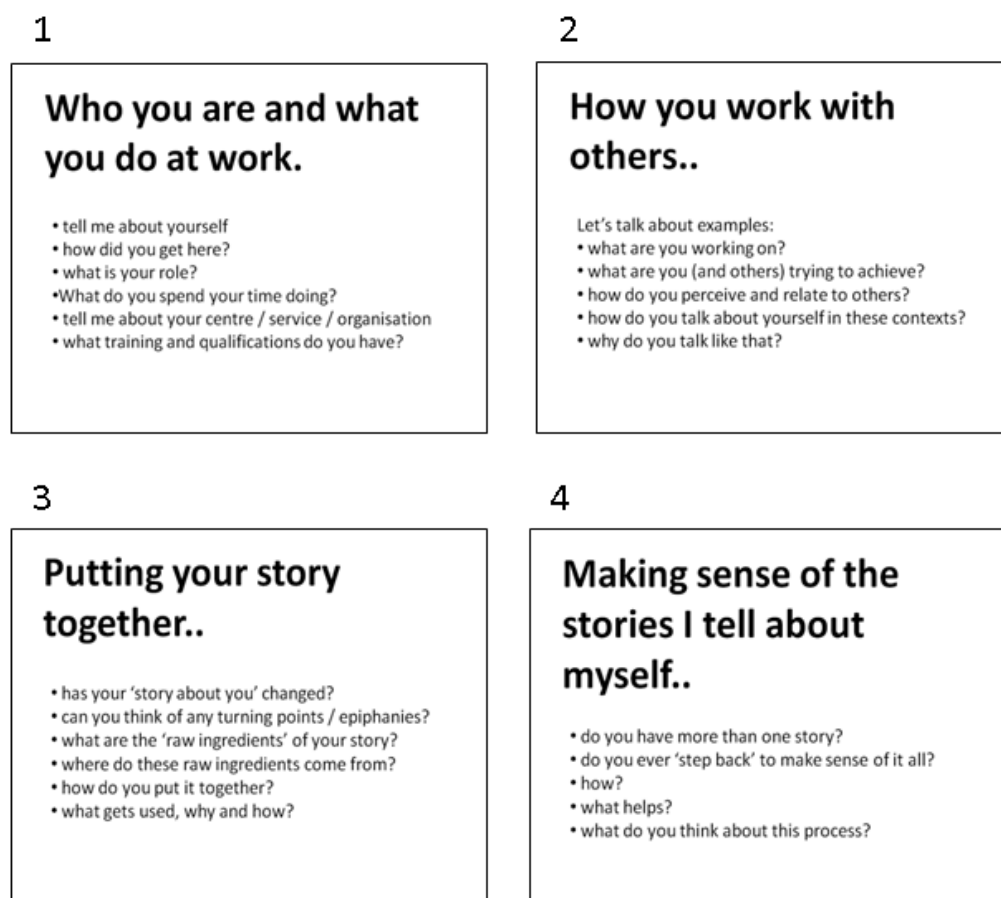


Figure 2: Themes for the first four conversations as presented to participants.



Analysis starts in the research conversations

In other methodology designs, the discussion of findings or artefacts resulting from the interpretation of data may exist in a phase separate to that of data collection. This was not the case here, and I wish to draw attention to the ways in which I incorporated early stages of interpretation into the research conversations, so the activity seen as a whole incorporates repeated hermeneutic movements back and forth; comparing, connecting and so forth (see Figure 1). This is consistent with a sense-making approach, where research questions are concerned with participants' understandings both of the content and deployment of their identity stories.

Sampling and ethical considerations

At this point I will discuss who was involved and how. This contextualises the subsequent focus on ethics, methods and validity. I chose to identify and work with a very small number of individual participants in this study.

Working with a small number of participants is appropriate in a detailed, hermeneutic study involving participants becoming deeply involved in a rich, interpretive process. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) legitimise studies which deal with a small number, or individual participants where the “approach calls for a concentrated and intensive study” and individuals are “studied in considerable depth, as well as in context” (p.1165).

In the first chapter of this thesis, I spoke of how my study began with a reflection on my own experience as someone who had been a leader within integrated, early years services before moving on into higher education as a researcher and lecturer. I was also privileged to work with many other individuals who led integrated, early years services through the NPQICL programme mentioned in the literature review. I was very conscious that through my role as part of the team facilitating the NPQICL, I now worked with individuals who had begun the process of reflecting on professional experience and ‘telling their story’. As this study developed, I designed a sampling strategy within ex cohorts of NPQICL participants⁸.

Although there was an obvious element of convenience in considering ex NPQICL participants, my overall approach to sampling was nevertheless purposeful, or purposive (Oliver, 2006, pp.245-246). Participation in my study involved individuals in over a year of very personal conversation and reflection about how they spoke about themselves and how this related to their professional practice. It required a willingness to be an active participant in conversations, to be able to commit the required time (at least ten hours of talk), and to be open to new ways of working (the visual elements, for example). All previous NPQICL participants would be familiar with the axiological (value) and pedagogical basis of the NPQICL, which were similar

⁸ Those with whom I no longer had involvement in my role as facilitator, academic tutor or mentor, for ethical reasons.

to those of my planned study, but I did not wish to assume that *all* previous participants in the NPQICL would feel comfortable or able to work in a similar way again. I therefore needed to ensure equality of opportunity for participation in the study, whilst making clear the specific commitments participation would require.

My invitation for participation in the study was issued through the NPQICL programme administrator, making clear that this was not a request on behalf of the NPQICL programme. Written information was provided (Appendix 1 & 2), giving initial information about the study, along with my contact details if individuals wished to contact me to express an interest. With those that expressed an interest, I discussed the details of the study, and the broad sequence of progression in the study from role identification through to reflexive consideration of their narrative sense-making (Appendix 3). By focusing on *understanding* of the study and implications for participation, individuals were well placed to provide informed consent.

In the documentation supplied to support informed consent (Appendix 2) I also considered potential indirect consequences of individuals' participation for their employing organisations. Whilst I was inviting *individuals* to participate, they would necessarily be discussing their leadership practices and interactions at work. My documentation for participants' employers required careful thought; I wished to address potential legitimate questions about anonymity and confidentiality of participants, but also co-workers, the setting(s) and employing organisation. Information provided to employers discussed confidentiality and anonymity, and examples of the questions which would be explored, as well as how this would be done. I highlighted potential benefits to participants, how I would deal with any possible psychological distress and any form of disclosure relating to safeguarding participants or other individuals. After initial conversations, I obtained informed consent from four individuals within the NPQICL alumni sample.

Researcher and participant roles and ethical considerations

One key consideration in the methodology design was the nature of my positioning within the study and my relationship to the participants and the study data. This was important as the study was to be co-constructed and hermeneutical, both of which draw attention to my active role in configuring the data in the study. One of the first issues I considered was my previous involvement with study participants specifically in relation to power inequality. My response to this was to design a methodology that positioned participants as active agents. In addition, I identified the issue of *power* in this case as something primarily socially constructed, or enacted. My own use of language and discursive practices (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995) were therefore carefully considered before sessions with participants and reflexively through my research journal and blog⁹. Consistent with the themes in feminist literature summarised in chapter two, I needed to consider ways in which I could *empower* participants in our conversations and planned to focus on *shared* enquiry thus respecting the sense-making purposes of participants.

Keeping a research journal and blog was important for other reasons beyond monitoring my own discursive practices within research conversations. At a broader level, I identified the need to be clear about how interpretive or analytic concepts emerged through the course of the study. This was particularly important because of the progressive research design, where subsequent sessions built upon previous sessions, and visual artefacts had a central role in configuring narrative elements and larger narratives.

My reflexive and carefully documented process clarified my position as a researcher who had a facilitating role in co-constructing data. I was clear that my ideas and narratives were not the focus of conversations, but recognised that the complex movements of hermeneutic activity potentially could obscure 'where I was' in relation to the data. In terms of positionality, my aim,

⁹ Material contained in my blog focused on my reflexive considerations of the research process, and did not refer to specifics of my study or those participating in it. I have discussed the ethics of blogging at my invited seminar on research and 'Web 2.0' at the Social Policy Research Unit, summer 2013: see my presentation at: <http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/seminars.html> and my blog at: <http://changingpractice.blogspot.co.uk>

consistent with the co-constructive, reflexive and progressive principles of the study previously articulated, was to create a shared 'space for wondering'. However, because of the careful ways in which I documented and 'mapped' the process (for example, using visual methods I go on to discuss) this was also a space that had clear 'traces' of activity which could be recognised, negotiated and followed by myself and participants. Not only was I clear about my position in the study, but participants identified my role in how I talked, in transcripts, through contribution of cartoon images or in maps. These practices enabled participants to accept, reject or reinterpret any of my questions, impressions or summaries in an assertive way, which they all did at times.

My positionality was not only acknowledged in the 'documentation' of how I introduced, questioned, summarised in the early and middle stages of the study, but it was also carefully considered in the way in which coded narrative data as we reached sessions four and five. When I came to code narrative data in the latter stages of the study, I wished to be clear about the *meaning* of codes and their rationale for selection, as they would be represented on 'maps' I produced¹⁰ and have an active role in the narrative space. These issues, whilst relevant to the issue of my positioning and relationship to the study, are dealt with later in this chapter when I discuss the interpretive 'strand' (or analysis) that ran through it (see Figure 1).

Using visual artefacts in the narrative space

My consideration of the use of visual artefacts in the narrative space was informed by the history of visual methods in social research generally. Eric Margolis and Luc Pauwels (2011) argue for the integration of findings and practices in visual research and the development of their "methodological depth" (p.3) which comes from appreciating and learning from their development. Bernt Schnettler (2013) provides one account of the development of these methods, in which he charts their beginnings, which had aims of the visual presenting a "documentation of realities" (p.42) in activities such as the photography of the moving human body (p.54). This

¹⁰ Discussed in this chapter.

work was to develop in the early twentieth century outside of science and was exemplified by the documentary photography of individuals and later used in the context of ethnographic fieldwork. Schnettler (2013) then traces this tradition to the modern forms of “sociological hermeneutics”. In film at least, contemporary visual methods are then framed by Schnettler (2013) in the context of a “crisis of representation” (p.48) which forced (ethnographic) visual methods to address reflexive issues about the role of the researcher, leading into contemporary work such as interpretive video analysis. Overall, this is a journey from visual as ancillary record to the visual being a site of enquiry itself, in which many of the questions I have posted about positionality are familiar.

Visual methods can be categorised in various ways. Jon Prosser and Andrew Loxley (2008) introduce key works in categories they introduce as “researcher created” and “respondent created”. In the former category, the authors (Ibid.) cite the work of Christian Heath and Jon Hindmarsh (2002) who analysed video interaction between patients and doctors, and Timothy Asch and Napoleon Chagnon’s (1975) interpretive filmwork on a fight within the Yanomamo people of Venezuela. In the latter (respondent created) category, John Collier’s (1967) work on photo-elicitation is of note, as is Joseph D. Novak and Bob Gowin’s (1984) work with concept maps, along with Jon Prosser and Andrew Loxley’s (2007) work on mind-maps of friendship groups in the school playground. Creative methods listed include the Lego ‘making’ work facilitated by David Gauntlett (2007) and Noreen M. Whetton and Jennifer McWhirter’s (1998) “draw and write” technique.

In contemporary scholarship, authors such as Gillian Rose (2013), Marcus Banks and David Zeitlyn (2015) and Sarah Pink (2013) provide valuable overview and commentary on visual methods from differing disciplinary positions. Together with the examples provided by Prosser and Loxley (2008), these authors display attention to the *active* use of visual methods as a means of making meaning, which is something I set out to achieve.

As noted in this introduction to this chapter and illustrated in Figure 1, hermeneutic activity in the study utilised visual elements. I draw attention now to my use of these visual elements in a reflexive, hermeneutic process.

My use of the *visual* within this methodology is important to it as a reflexive, hermeneutic process. Stephen Spencer (2011) argues both that “visual records can create vivid and authentic personal narratives” (p.33) and that “visual material provides a form of ‘thick description’ which helps in the exploration and understanding of theoretical ideas” (Ibid.). However, despite the historical developments in the discipline I have summarised, I argue that traditional use of ‘the visual’ within methodology has not fully recognised its potential for material agency and meaning, for the visual to be something that interacts and is part of the hermeneutic process. This is something that Amira Henare, Martin Holbraad and Sari Wastell (Eds., 2007) discuss from an anthropological perspective, where they state;

"It remains a commonplace...that meanings can only be thought of as abstractions - ideas that somehow circulate in the ether, over a material substrate primordially devoid of significance." (p.3)

I therefore identify the visual aspect of my methodology not as decoration or illustration of the ‘real’ narratives; instead, visual elements have the potential to be *part of* the meaning making process. Gillian Rose (2011) argues that it is important to consider visual semiology, or “how images make meaning” (p.105). Consequently, I utilised a partly *visual* methodology because visual elements, when encountered in a research conversation focus attention on perception and meanings of things: they demanded interpretation and a narrative response. Additionally, visual methods enabled a practical and meaningful form of reflexivity for participants, enabling them to consider the significance and implications of their statements as they saw them differently, moved them and related them.

The creation and use of a visual aspect in my methodology went beyond the general motivation to create “vivid” narratives or even “thick description” (Spencer, 2011). Visual narratives had a specific function within both the narrative space and the theoretical frame. The characteristics of co-construction, reflexivity and progression I have identified require narratives to

be configured in multiple ways in this space, and for them to *encounter* other configurations of those narratives and other narratives. It is within this 'space' that the use of visual objects such as cartoons, 'maps' and table top assemblages (what I shall term *interpretive artefacts*) were useful. They formed part of (and supported) complex hermeneutic activity within the narrative space, as they enabled *creative encounters* between dialogue, texts, interpretive images and representational maps, where parts relate to the whole and in so doing both were transformed. Generally, my approach described in this chapter can also be identified as a form of visual elicitation, which is an approach that Rose (2011) and others identify as an approach used commonly in social science disciplines, enabling an exploration of "taken for granted" (Ibid. p.306) meanings and a way of empowering research participants.

Status and use of interpretive artefacts

Within my representation of the research process (Figure 1), I incorporate various forms of interpretive artefact; these have a particular status and role. In the last decade, the ontological and epistemological status of visual artefacts in research methodology has been discussed by a number of researchers including Eric Margolis and Luc Pauwels (Margolis & Pauwels, (Eds.), 2011) and Rose (2011). Within this body of literature, it is argued that visual objects have a *presence* in the narrative space that utilises their material nature as things that can be touched, picked up, rejected, or moved. For example, Stephen Pattison (2007) discusses this aspect of what he describes as the "apparently basic human need to have haptic-visual relations with things" (p.51). Pattison (2007) extends his position, arguing that:

"To commend haptic vision is not just to recognise and occasionally legitimise touching as well as looking, it is to acknowledge the value of an alternative scoping regime. A scoping regime is 'an integrated complex of visual theories and practices' (Jay, 1998, p.4). Scoping regimes are constituted by perceptual experiences, social practices and discursive constructs. Haptic vision is therefore a complex of attitudes, theories, metaphors and practices, a complex way of

relating phenomenologically to the world, not just the application of hands to things. Drawing attention to this kind of way of understanding and working with vision problematises the hegemony of isolated, occularcentric, abstract, decontextualised, disembodied vision that appears to separate people from the realm of artefacts and material images." (p.54)

In other words, the visual within my methodology was *active* within the conceptual narrative space, and facilitated a different sort of mimetic activity on the part of participants. This approach to 'looking and touching' connects with the phenomenological aspects of Ricoeur's hermeneutics. Further, the use of visual or interpretive artefacts made narrative discussion of experience more tangible by bringing images of experience into the present. This had the effect of enhancing the agency, consciousness and reflexivity of the individual configuring their stories by making narrative elements, the building blocks of narrative, *present* in the narrative space. Along these lines, Pattison (2007) argues for a re-evaluation of visual artefacts:

"If artefacts are full of meaning, emotion and intention, if they have qualities of secondary agency, resistance and facilitation that affect humans, then it is likely that humans will have personlike relations with them." (pp.179-180)

Outside of anthropology, perhaps the theoretical tradition that has most substantially examined the status of visual artefacts is socio-cultural theory. Socio-cultural theory following Lev Vygotsky (1930-1934/1978) and particularly literature which focuses on pedagogy and research authored by those such as Harry Daniels (2001; 2008) Marx W. Wartofsky (1973); Dorothy H. Hill and Michael Cole (1995) and David Bakhurst and Christine Synnowich (1995) carefully consider the psychological and methodological implications of artefacts which are more than passive objects or representations.

Vygotsky's work (1930-1934/1978) emphasised the role of culture in prefiguring individual psychological representations and symbolic thinking, drawing attention to the role of language and the use of psychological tools by individuals to mediate the social world. Specifically, Daniels (2008) discusses Vygotsky's emphasis on how psychological tools direct the mind and behaviour, how they enable individuals to become active agents in their

understanding of the world and how, in using tools, people “both shape and are shaped by the artefacts that mediate their engagement with the world” (p.2).

Daniels (2008) further draws attention to the socio-cultural emphasis on objects as tools within a process of symbolic mediation, identifying the “meaning embodied or sedimented in objects as they are put into use in social worlds” (p.9). In the light of this, visual objects take on an active role in my methodology as they are used to embody shared meaning and complex ideas, enabling, as Daniels (2008) suggests, “radical transformations [to] take place in the relationships between psychological functions as a result of such mediated psychological activity” (p.9): in other words, they support the psychological functions of sense-making activity.

I use the term *artefacts* to describe my cartoons, maps and ‘table top’ assemblages. This term is used often in this area. For instance, Holland and Cole (1995) identify that “an artefact is an aspect of the material world that has a collectively remembered use” (p.476). Given that this is a broad definition, however, I also look to Daniel’s (2008) discussion of Wartofsky’s work, which identifies a hierarchy of artefacts where “primary artefacts” are items “used directly in the making of things”, adding that “Secondary artefacts are representations of primary artefacts” and finally that “Tertiary artefacts were referred to by Wartofsky as imagined worlds. He sees works of art as examples of these tertiary artefacts or imagined worlds.” (p.10). I identify the use of visual artefacts in my own methodology as “tertiary artefacts” in that cartoons, ‘maps’ and table top assemblages of individual artefacts will refer to mutually constructed participants’ “worlds” in the same way that Ricoeur argues that *texts* refer to “worlds” as discussed in the previous chapter.

If cartoons placed on a table top were ‘simply’ seen as records then one would ignore their socio-cultural implications. However, within this study, visual artefacts are not decoration or alternative forms of factual, historical record, but as socio-cultural tools that have both *material* and *ideal* status. Holland and Cole (1995) state:

“artefacts have a necessarily material aspect and they are manufactured or produced in the sense that they are created in the process of goal directed human actions. But they are ideal in that their material form has been shared by their participation in the interactions of which they were previously a part and which they mediate in the present” (p.476)

Following this, in my methodology, cartoons, maps and assemblages are *material* in that they were a form of recording my own interpretations of participants’ narratives, and methods for working with data. Following Holland and Cole (1995), however, the interpretive artefacts were also *ideal* in that they mediated imagined worlds which participants configured in conversation with me. As material objects they were assembled, or configured so their individual meaning was transformed in the context of bigger stories. As ideal objects, they represented – or mediated – a complex set of related narrative elements, so a cartoon ‘captured’ a set of ideas from my own perspective, which was then itself subject to a further conversation as participants responded to them. In effect, they were *heuristic* tools for the narrative space.

Conversations about professional identity and selfhood were exercises in ‘thinking aloud’, and participants were invited to participate in a complex set of hermeneutic activities which configured, deconstructed and expanded narratives, making connections, comparing accounts and *exploring*. Responding to cartoon artefacts involved considering an imagined world; creating table-top assemblages by placing individual images in relation to each other and annotating further extended this process, and looking for patterns in a representative ‘map’ called for an interpretive response. Hence, the *use* of interpretive artefacts in the methodology was central to the process of sense-making.

Designing methods

“...all knowledge is created from the action taken to obtain it”
(Holstein, 1995, p.3)

In this section, I discuss the development and deployment of specific methods used within the methodology for the study.

Working with narrative: hermeneutic conversations

I have made reference to ‘conversations’ throughout this chapter and have associated a number of characteristics with my use of this term. Firstly, I identify them as *encounters*: human interactions, in which participants and I were physically present, and utilised aspects of inter-personal communication such as gesture and emotion beyond the content of dialogue. Secondly, the conversations were *interactional*: my aim was to understand narratives of self and practice; this involved more than a simple ‘ask and answer and move on’ sequence, but was characterised by repeated, complex hermeneutic movements within the conversational space. Thirdly, the conversations were planned to be *on-going* and *expansive*, consisting of five sessions with participants that supported configuration and refiguration of narratives, and these sessions looked to expand discussion of narrative elements which seem to have significance or explanatory power to myself and participants. Beyond these broad characteristics, I highlight below some specific considerations for the conversational method I used.

The focus of my research conversations begins broadly with discussion of experience. Squire (2008) focuses on key characteristics of *experience*, as opposed to event based narrative research. Whereas event centred narrative research often gathers a large body of stories, experience centred research limits the number of interviewees in order to pay attention to the particular features of narratives of experience. Squire (2008) argues that;

“The experience centred approach assumes that narratives: are sequential and meaningful; are definitely human; ‘re-present’ experience, reconstituting it as well as expressing it; display transformations or change” (p.42)

Methods that focus on experience narratives therefore allow participants to work heuristically with their stories, recognising that meaning making results from an understanding of how the parts fit together (or are configured). This takes time, and involves detailed examination (Riessman, 2008, p.6). My own conversations made time and space to do this, and paid attention to contexts for stories, for as Squire (2008) argues: “To understand ‘meaning’ experience-centred narrative researchers often expand the contexts, as well as the materials, that they study” (p.43).

The ‘space’ created for a conversation was not neutral. I followed Holstein’s (1995) constructivist view of narrative research that recognises the constituting role of the interview process *itself* in shaping narratives. Holstein (1995) argues that;

“Treating interviewing as a social encounter leads us rather quickly to the possibility that the interview is not merely a neutral conduit or source of distortion, but rather the productive site of reportable knowledge itself” (p.3)

In conversations I paid attention to both *what* was discussed and *how* the discussions occurred. In line with much experientially based narrative research, I chose to introduce an element of structure to conversations, reflecting the general purposive characteristic of my approach via questions and themes which introduced narrative material to the conversation, and invited certain types of narrative responses.

In considering *how* conversations occur, I drew upon the constructivist perspective of Holstein (1995) and feminist approaches to narrative methodology such as those discussed by Sharlene N. Hesse-Biber (2011) which require consideration of the *discursive strategies* “through which particular versions of the world are accomplished” (p.66). Within research conversations, I focused on strategies that positioned me as a resource for participants in their sense-making process, *enabling* dialogue and encouraging explanation. Following constructivist and feminist traditions of narrative research, I was mindful of my active role in empowering; in allowing participants to move, as Hesse-Biber (2011) states, “from the margins to the centre” (p.3), in *including*, in *disrupting* traditional ways of knowing, and in

engaging participants in the *theory* as well as practice of research. I needed to remain attentive, present and reflexive in research conversations, and to avoid using discursive strategies which oppress, re-purpose or ignore participants' intentions and meanings following Holstein's (1995) idea of *the active interview*, thereby recognising my own role in actively engaging and shaping dialogue. As Holstein (1995) suggested;

“Both parties to the interview are necessarily and unavoidable active. Each is involved in meaning-making work. Meaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning, nor simply transported through respondent replies; it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter.” (p.4)

Holstein (1995) emphasises the opportunity this provides to “articulate ongoing interpretive structures, resources, and orientations” (p.16) in a mutual way. I was part of the conversation, but recognised my responsibility to draw attention to not just the content of dialogue, but to the way in which narrative methods and materials were being used and exchanged within it, so participants' could fully understand and shape the process that ultimately produced texts and visual artefacts.

Visual artefacts

The questions “How do experiences turn into identity stories?” and “How do stories shape on-going action?” involve working within a complex and interconnected ‘narrative space’. This was squared with my stated methodological intentions to be ‘co-constructive’, ‘reflexive’ and ‘progressive’, and my intention for the primary method I employed – semi structured conversations – to be *empowering* for participants. In my own practice with children, young people and families, I have learnt the value of ‘scaffolding’ (Bruner, 1960/1977) others' thinking, especially where individuals come to a topic for the first time. I also wished to facilitate the dynamic ‘back and forth’ hermeneutic movement. In the sections that follow, I will firstly set out my rationale for using a range of interpretive visual artefacts and then move on to their practical deployment.

Issues of visual representation in research were explored by Elliott W. Eisner. Eisner (1997) emphasised the need for visual methods and representations to *illuminate* research, arguing that;

“First, it is clear that all of the forms of representation...are used to shape experience and to enlarge understanding. Whether you use a story, create a film, employ a diagram, or construct a chart, what such tools have in common is the purpose of illuminating rather than obscuring the message. One reason for selecting one tool rather than another is because it does the job that you want done better than the others.” (p.8)

Visual tools, Eisner (1997) argues, offer a range of distinct advantages to research such as my own. Eisner (1997) cites their ability to create empathy, their ability to create “a sense of particularity that abstractions cannot render” and argues that their “productive ambiguity” is evocative, and as such it “generates insight and invites attention to complexity” (p.8). Additionally, Eisner states that the use of visual tools “increase the variety of questions that we can ask” and their use can “exploit individual aptitudes”, or allow individuals such as myself to draw on previous experience (p.8). Eisner (1997) concludes by considering the how alternative representations can be received stating that, traditionally, “what one seeks are claims and explanations that give as little space as possible for competing explanations, rival hypotheses, or personal judgement” (p.9).

Building on this, Sandra Weber (in Knowles & Cole, 2008) discusses the way people interpret, create and use images in everyday life. She recognises that many factors that influence the ways in which images are viewed, including who is involved and the context itself. Weber (Ibid.) also draws on key theoretical works from authors such as John Berger (1972), Jean Baudrillard (1994), Roland Barthes (Barthes, 1993), and Pierre Bourdieu (1993). In discussing using images, Weber (in Knowles and Cole, 2008) suggests that;

“An image can be a multilayered theoretical statement, simultaneously positing even contradictory propositions for us to consider, pointing to the fuzziness of logic, and the complex or even paradoxical nature of particular human experiences.” (p.43)

Weber points to the practical advantages that the use of drawn images bring, including that they can ‘show’ aspects of knowledge attached to a word, they

make us 'see' in new ways, they are often memorable, they communicate more holistically and, as Eisner (1997) argued, they help us to see empathically. Her writing reflects the complexities and ambiguities of the emergent visual research field (with visual images used in many different research traditions and contexts), in calling for clarity in just *what* is being communicated in a visual image.

My approach to the use of visual (cartoon) images is in the context of constructivist and hermeneutic traditions. The use of visual modes of qualitative enquiry provides an opportunity to negotiate, qualify and explain meaning in the research situation. They offer ways of working with data in formative stages, to as Lynn Butler-Kisber and Tuii Poldma (2010) state, "work through emergent concepts" and "help represent them to others" (p.2). Abhigyan Singh (2011), reflects some of these ideas in his discussion of how visual artefacts can be "boundary objects" (p.42) supporting negotiation of meaning between participants and researcher. Similarly, the use of visual artefacts, Butler-Kisber and Poldma (2010) argue;

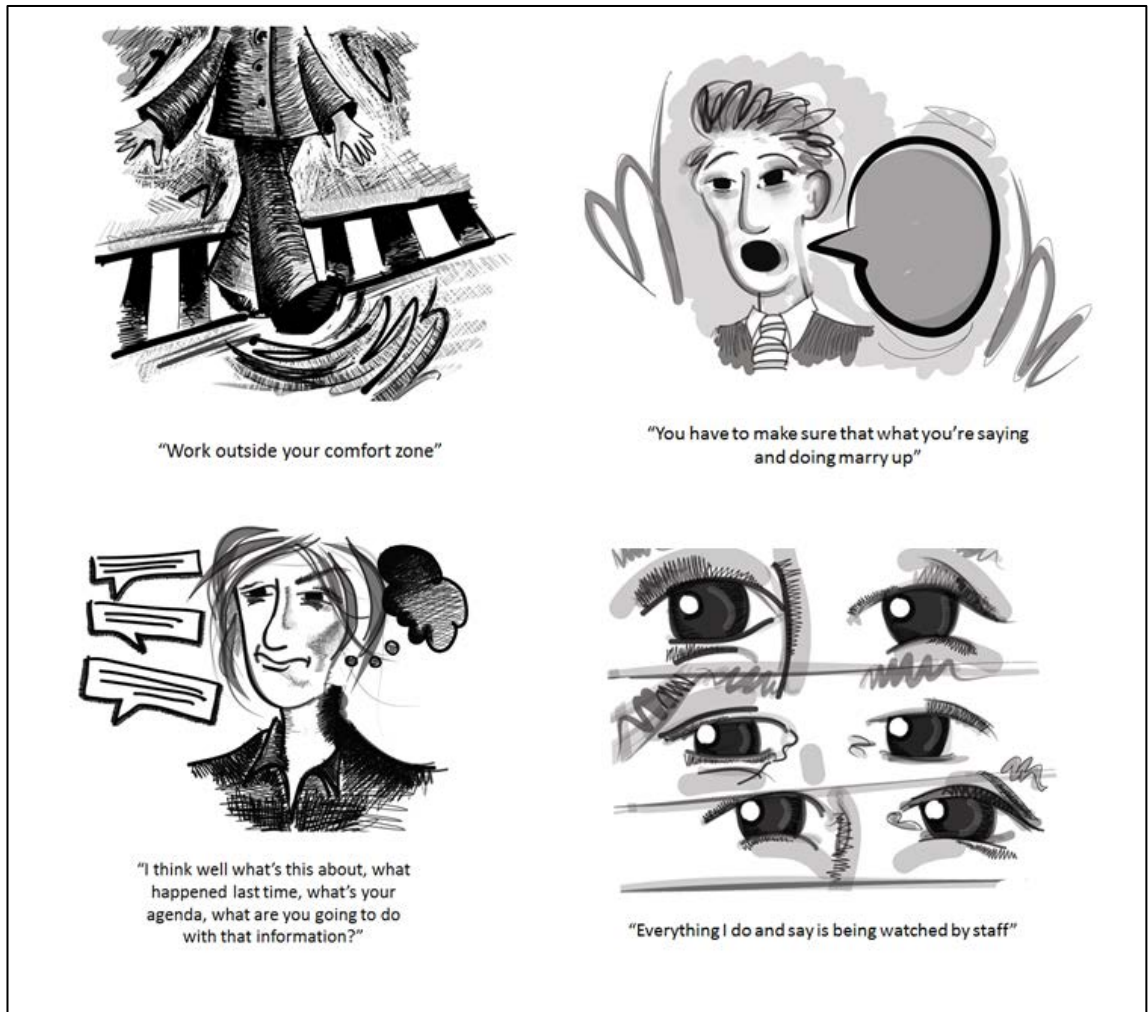
"provide[s] a place for the researcher to document and record ideas, concepts, and meanings gleaned during the making process itself. This direct experience helps the researcher to construct the meanings in the data and make links needed to synthesize thoughts and push the analysis further." (p.14)

The presence of visual images in the research process, as is the case here, addresses some valid questions about how they are to be received and used. However, aside from literature, such as the work of Ruth Bartlett (2013) that deals with the use of cartoons in disseminating research, methodological literature on the use of cartoon images as *interpretive artefacts* is limited. David Gauntlett's work is helpful (Gauntlett, 2007; 2011; Gauntlett & Holzwarth, 2006), and introduces topics such as the ethnographic dimensions of visual research methods and the social functions of creativity but informed my own methods specifically in relation to his work supporting individuals to use Lego construction materials to discuss issues of identity (2007, pp.128-157). He demonstrates a sophisticated use of visual artefacts to support *creative explorations* of identity, where a visual / physical artefact is used by participants to explore multiple meanings (Ibid. p.156), to

act as metaphors (ibid. p.158, p.183) and to offer alternative constructions of identity often not seen by others. As with Weber (2008), Gauntlett argues that visual methods offer individuals opportunities to communicate different kinds of information: a quality I explored with my cartoons and table top assemblages.

Whilst literature on the use of visual images and artefacts in social research is growing, there remains a gap in methodological literature on the use of these resources as interpretive artefacts, including within the context of Holstein's (1995) 'active interview'. Some inspiration for practical use of cartoons and similar visual artefacts in dialogical situations can be drawn from pedagogical literature, such as Daniels (2001), who whilst stating that "there has been relatively little investigation of the mediational properties of non-linguistic cultural artefacts such as visual images" (p.131), does take visual images and artefacts seriously in theoretical *and* practical terms. This study, then, breaks new ground in developing a methodology that draws on what has been discussed in this chapter so far in responding to Vygotsky's socio-cultural and Ricoeur's hermeneutic principles. Here, socio-cultural instructional theory emphasises the *mediational* potential of these materials, and hermeneutic material emphasises their potential for use in *configuration* of narratives, for example through the role of the image as metaphor.

Figure 3: Example cartoons



At this stage, some practical illustration of my own use of cartoons within conversations supports the discussion. Whilst I planned the overall progressive structure of the conversations, moving from identification through to reflexive sense-making work, with potential to use images in conjunction with one another as we moved towards the latter parts of the process, I remained flexible in how visual images would actually be used, recognising the co-constructed nature of the sessions. Participants chose not to draw images themselves – this seemed to them to be a distraction, and made them think about the drawing, rather than the conversation. Whilst we had blank paper available to annotate or record key words in the first session, the first use of cartoon images for all participants began from the start of the

second session. For me, the actual images were not the most important thing - they did not need to be works of art: the value in use of cartoon images was in the way they contributed to the hermeneutic process.

Following the first session with participants, I studied the transcripts produced from the audio recordings, noting additional reflections in my journal. I concentrated on particular phrases or moments that I felt were in some way significant to participants, or was particularly revealing on the relationship between participants' talk about 'self' and 'practices'. Practically, this often involved using a highlighter pen to initially mark up transcripts and to begin sketching in an A3 pad. The process of sketching itself created a process within which I could reflect, review and refine my selections; assessing draft cartoon images against a criteria of whether they reflected the intention and meaning of what participants' said, and their potential to act as active artefacts in the next conversation. As an 'artefact', a cartoon image needed to reflect the characteristics identified by Weber (in Knowles and Cole, 2008, pp.44-49), including the ability to connect multiple meanings and references attached to a phrase in dialogue and to cause participants to 'see' utterances in new ways.

The process of creating cartoon images as interpretations supported my own reflective process but had greatest use in the conversations themselves. I initially introduced images as a way of discussing the previous session with participants and was struck by the positive response to the images debating and qualifying the meaning of some of them. Looking at cartoon images that clearly related to things they had said introduced an element of humour, and occasionally images had a profound initial reaction from participants when they 'saw' something they had been struggling to articulate previously, or recognised the significance of a narrative to them.

Figure 4: Brenda, Session 4, responding to the 'Trials and Tribulations' cartoon.



"I'm interested that you drew the picture of the trials and tribulations, I love the picture, but it just kinda brings it all to the forefront, seeing the picture like that. It's a challenging day, every day and actually, just...I don't know. I think because of that, because I have been through so much in such a short time"

Beyond their ability to help participants re-connect with the on-going conversation, cartoon images acted as active agents within the conversational space. Having a physical presence on the table was symbolically powerful, and they demanded explanation, assessment, touching and moving in relation to one another. Images interacted with conversations and demonstrated the multi-modal status I previously alluded to; within one session cartoons could be a *reminder*, a *window* into an experiential world, the *site* of reconfiguration work and also act as smaller *narrative elements* in developing meta-narratives.

Table top assemblages

In the fourth session I planned to begin reviewing conversations and images from the previous three sessions. By this point, I had spent approximately six hours talking with participants talking about their narratives of identity and practice. Hundreds of lines of transcript had been generated, and eighteen separate cartoon images had been presented then actively used within conversations in different ways. In the fourth session, most of the time was spent working with cartoon images, with participants initially asked to set images out on a table top surface in a way that was meaningful to them.

The process of constructing and using table top assemblages is identified in my own planning note / reference for participants (Figures 4 and 5), then in a photograph of a 'completed' table-top assemblage in Figure 7.

Figure 5: Starting 'table top' work with cartoon artefacts: guide for session 4.

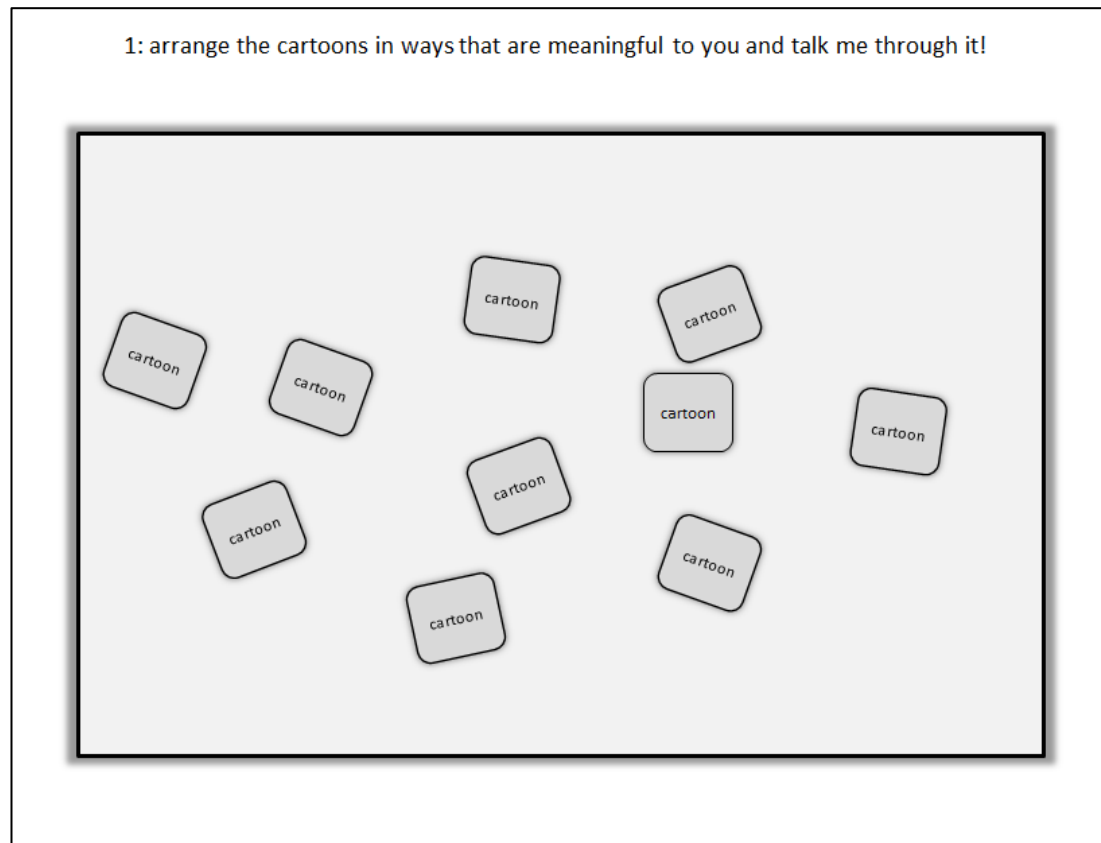
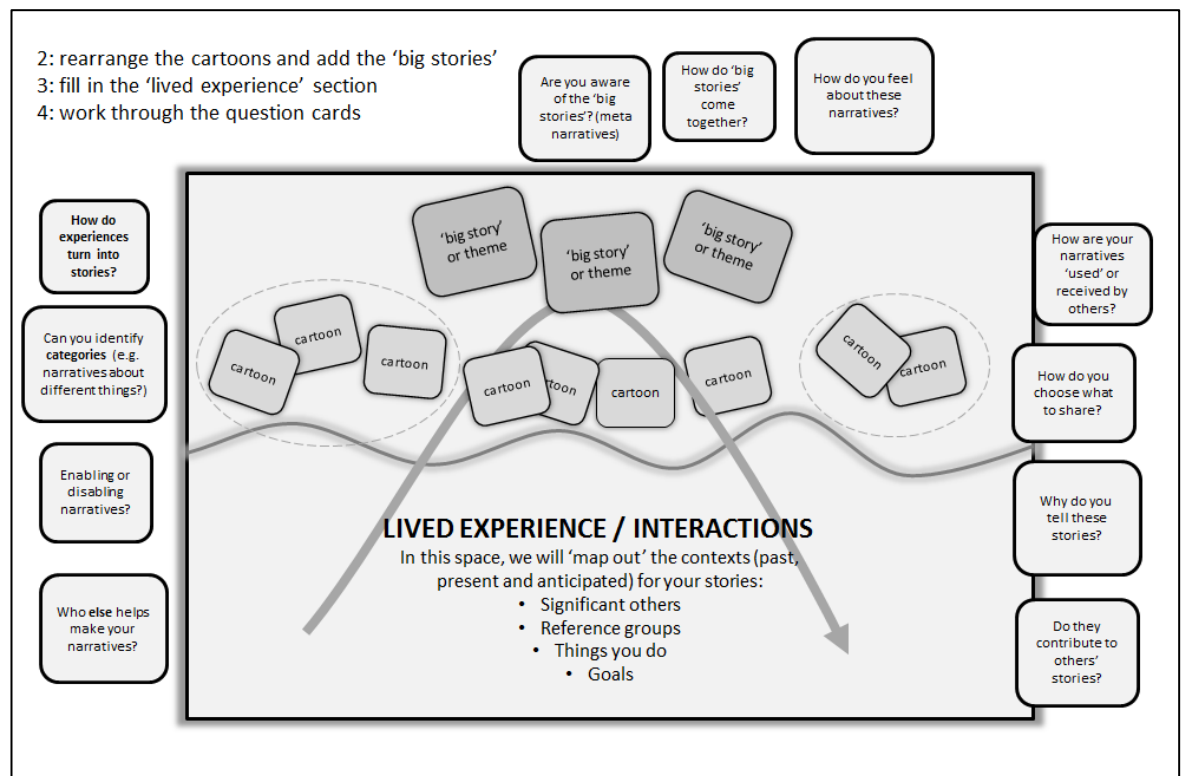
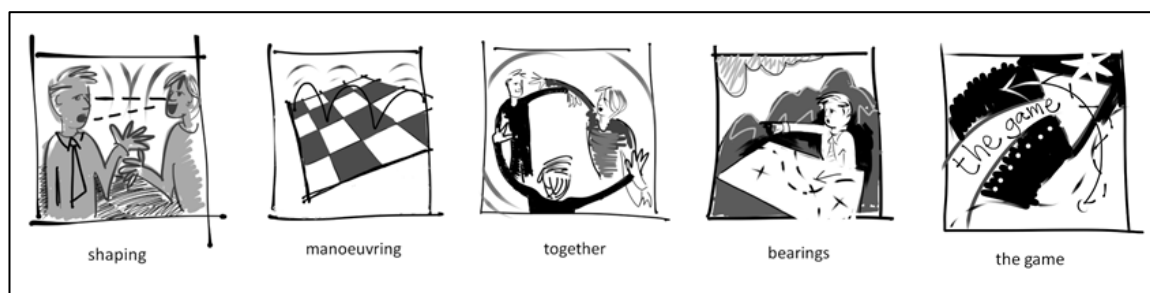


Figure 6: Planned stages 2-4 of ‘table top’ work with cartoons, questions and annotations.



I identified that in addition to using cartoon artefacts in groupings and patterns within sessions, I could work with participants to interpret and theorise *together*, relating artefacts created in sessions to ideas discussed in the theory framework chapter. I planned to do this through stages as 2-4 illustrated in Figure 1. This figure was used with participants in session four and applies cartoon artefacts. Cartoons used in this process were both those produced after each session, and ‘context’ cartoons created to illustrate the high level codes in the practice-talk category. These ‘context’ cartoons were used to explore the idea of ‘practice’, which according to Ricoeur’s model of the mimetic arc, was also the site of prefiguration and refiguration.

Figure 7: Example practice-talk (context) cartoons used in the bottom half of the table top assemblage.



Like the original cartoons generated following sessions, these ‘contextual’ cartoons were drawn by me following a detailed review of reference to higher level codes within the practice-talk category. I did this in order to make visible my own ways of thinking about participants’ stories, and so we could consider relationships between self-talk and practice-talk. In doing this, I applied the same approach to the use of these materials as with the previous set of cartoons: their value was as artefacts to be used (or not) in the conversational space.

Just as the context (Figure 6) cartoons related to ‘practice-talk’ category, ‘self-talk’ cartoons from previous sessions were used on the top half of the assemblage, relating to the configuration phase of the mimetic arc. Here was a practical way of considering how (configured) self-talk related to (practiced or applied) practice-talk, by using narrative material from our shared sense-making process. This method of working with assemblages of cartoons brought together participants meaning making structures with my own, as we have seen.

Can you identify categories (e.g. narratives about different things?)

being trusted and trustworthy

freedom and autonomy

Enabling or disabling narratives?

Practitioners

Children

Self autonomy

Subsistency

Working in isolation

head teachers

Parents

school contexts

children's centre contexts

Refiguration

How do experiences turn into stories?

unpacking the experience, the recognition of key elements of an experience that have impact there on the quality of being for the children (or practitioners) - step back to reflect appropriateness of ... or to the audience.

How are your narratives used or received by others?

Do they contribute to others' stories?

Refiguration models

Who am I talking to? - and How? WHY?

Why do you tell these stories?

Stories as a resource for drivers - Scotland's the obvious + reflection. Resource

the ones that stick on the ones that are useful in the real world.

Refiguration

Can you identify categories (e.g. narratives about different things?)

being trusted and trustworthy

freedom and autonomy

Enabling or disabling narratives?

Practitioners

Children

Self autonomy

Subsistency

Working in isolation

head teachers

Parents

school contexts

children's centre contexts

Refiguration

How do experiences turn into stories?

unpacking the experience, the recognition of key elements of an experience that have impact there on the quality of being for the children (or practitioners) - step back to reflect appropriateness of ... or to the audience.

How are your narratives used or received by others?

Do they contribute to others' stories?

Refiguration models

Who am I talking to? - and How? WHY?

Why do you tell these stories?

Stories as a resource for drivers - Scotland's the obvious + reflection. Resource

the ones that stick on the ones that are useful in the real world.

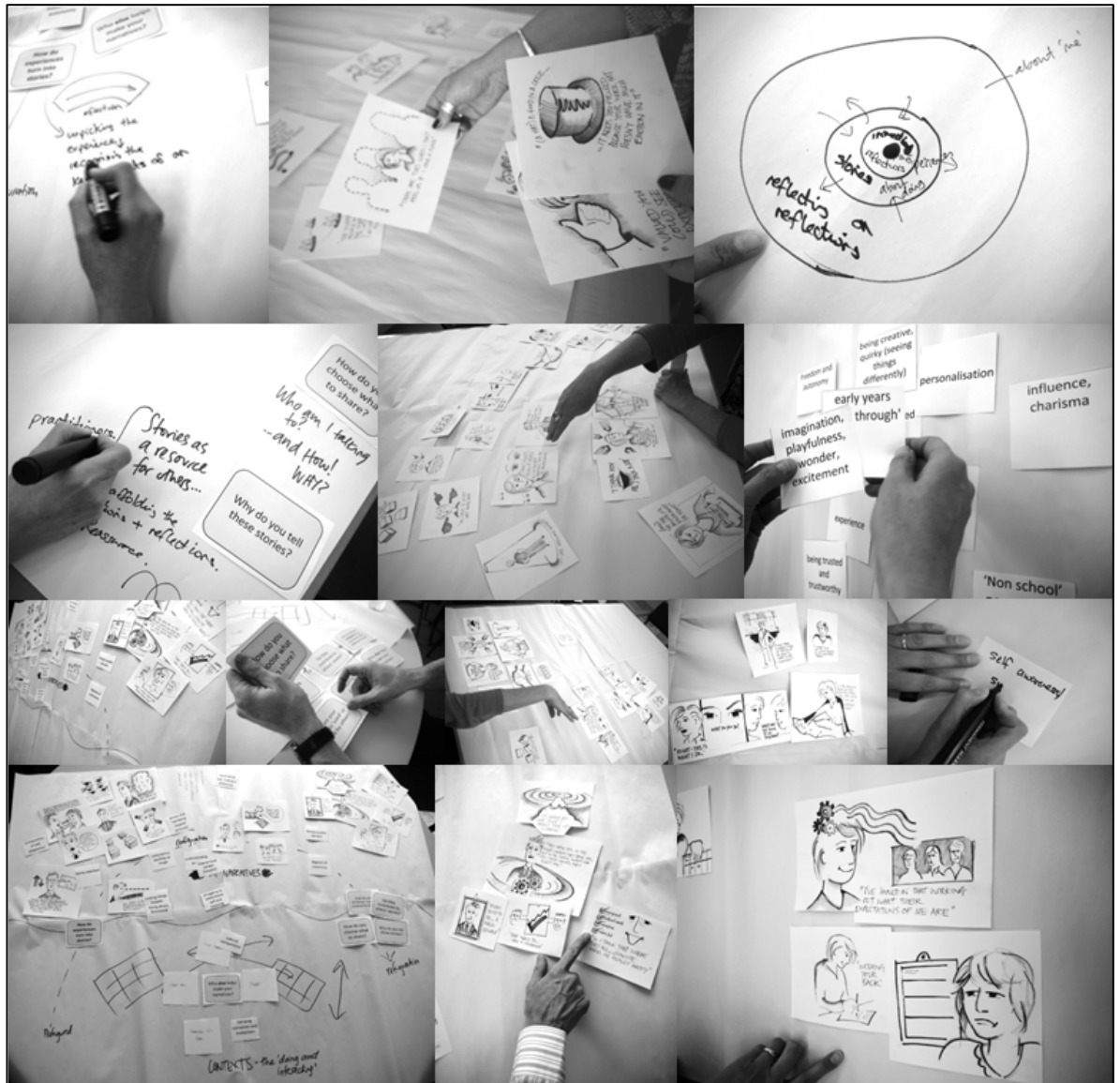
Refiguration

"I think the pictures have been really helpful cos I'm a visual person, as well. I'm really visual, so it's been important to have them, to be fair. I think I would have remembered some things but maybe not all things and maybe not have made the same connections without the pictures, because they are quite detailed...even though...it's quite impressive, Ian. They are quite detailed, even without the wording,

you know. So, they've certainly helped to categorise them as well cos you won't be able to remember all of that out of the sessions."

In addition, the materiality of cartoons – as objects with positions within a space – enabled participants to use grouping and distance to explore the relatedness of individual elements within the whole, reminiscent of techniques such as sculpting in family therapy as explored by Herbert and Irene Goldenberg (2011), a way of physically relating elements to explore relationship meanings. From the second sessions onwards (and particularly in session four, as described) objects were able to be reconfigured several times, as different ways of relating or grouping them became apparent. This method, influenced by ideas of 'sculpting' is contained within Iain R. Edgar's (1999) category of 'imagework' approaches, which draw from experiential groupwork techniques designed to "illicit implicit knowledge and self-identities of respondents in a way that other methods cannot" (p.199). Additionally, I supported the work of reconfiguration and elaboration through the provision of materials that allowed participants to annotate the large papered surface of the table that cartoons were placed upon. Working in this way allowed individual artefacts to also act as an assemblage, which was 'worked upon' by participants (and to an extent myself) with lines, diagrams, notations and explanations as these were generated in dialogue together.

Figure 9: Images of participants' sense-making activity with table top assemblages.



I also hoped that the creation of different 'assemblages' of cartoons would allow participants to connect with my own interpretive processes. In line with my reference to the constructivist work of Holstein and Gubrium (1995), I wished to "articulate ongoing interpretive structures, resources, and orientations" (p.16) so that participants could engage in more abstract ways in considering the processes involved with their creation and use.

Working with maps in the conversational space

As I have illustrated in Figure 8, the use of 'maps', together with cartoons and table top assemblages supported configuration and sense-making of narratives in conversation with participants. As I shall discuss in my section on interpretation, transcripts of narrative data were created by me in between sessions: these formed the focal point of my analysis, which began in earnest after session three and were also used to create the cartoons and 'maps'. In this section, I shall discuss my use of *self-talk* and *self-practice talk* maps in session five and on.

I will focus here on the rationale for these maps, and will leave the actual interpretive strategies associated with creating and using them to be discussed in the following section, although there is some overlap. As with cartoons, I wished to support participants' configuration and interpretive work. My use of maps in sessions four and five was focused on supporting participants' *interpretive* contributions to my study, and I produced two kinds of relational maps: those that represented connections between codes *within* self-narratives and maps which looked at relationships *between* codes between self-narratives and practice (or context) narratives (Figures 9-12).

Figure 10: First set of self-talk maps

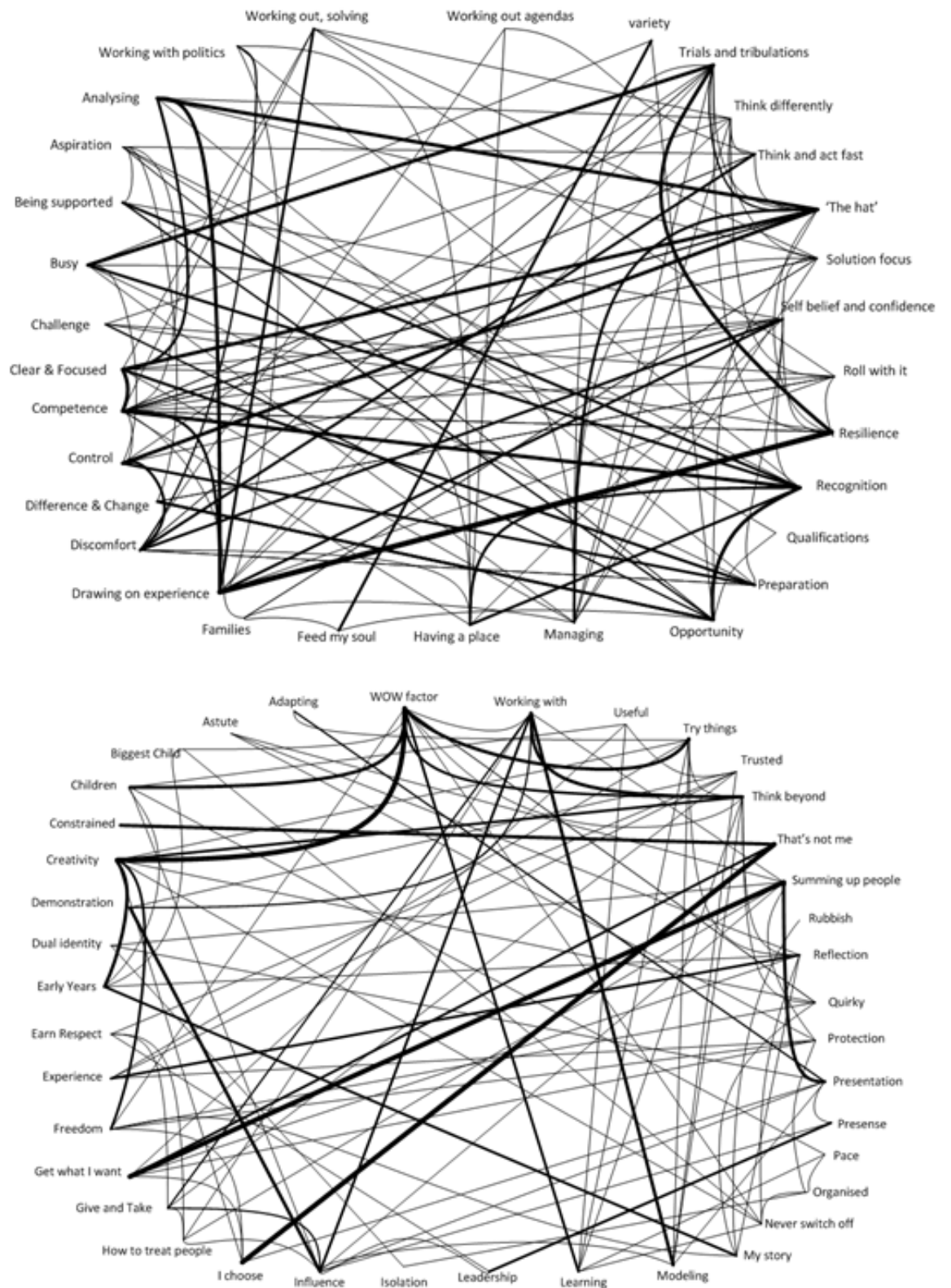


Figure 11: Second set of self-talk maps

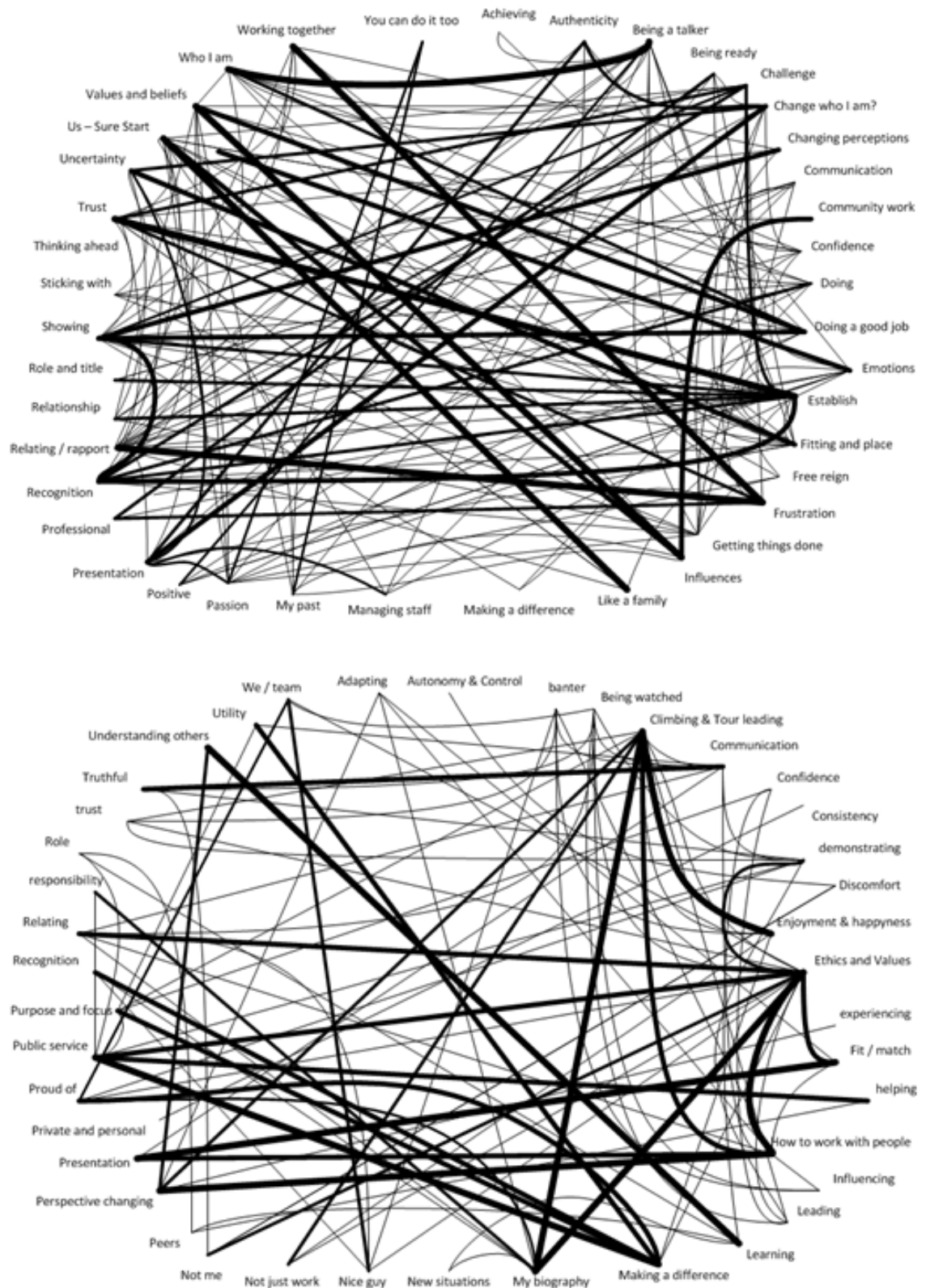


Figure 12.1: First set of self-practice talk maps

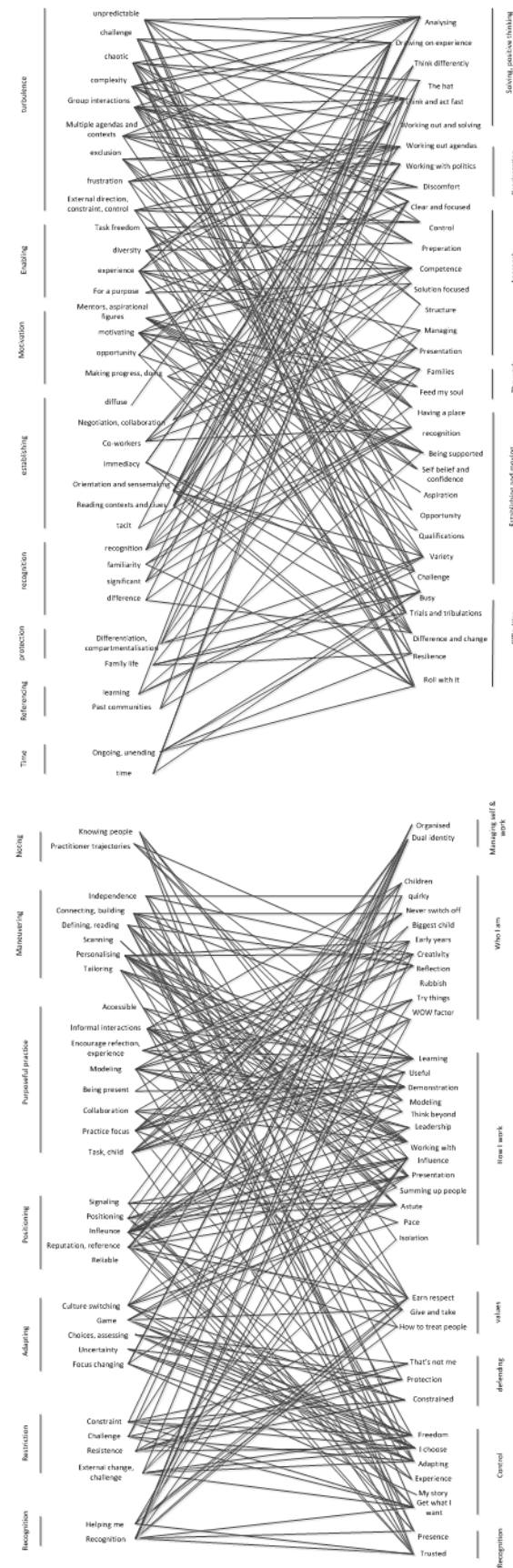


Figure 12.2: Detail example from first set of self-practice talk map

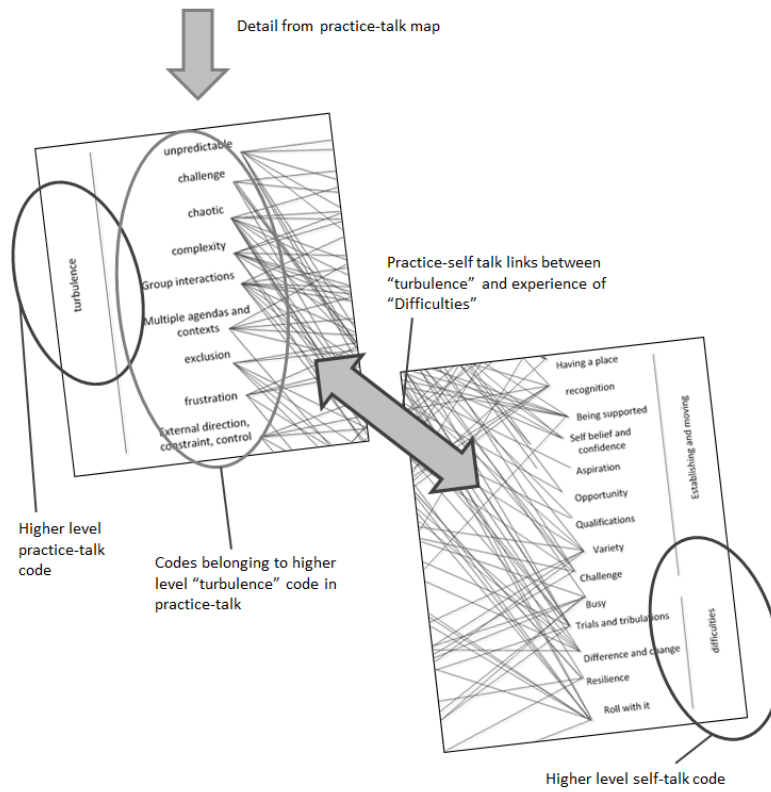
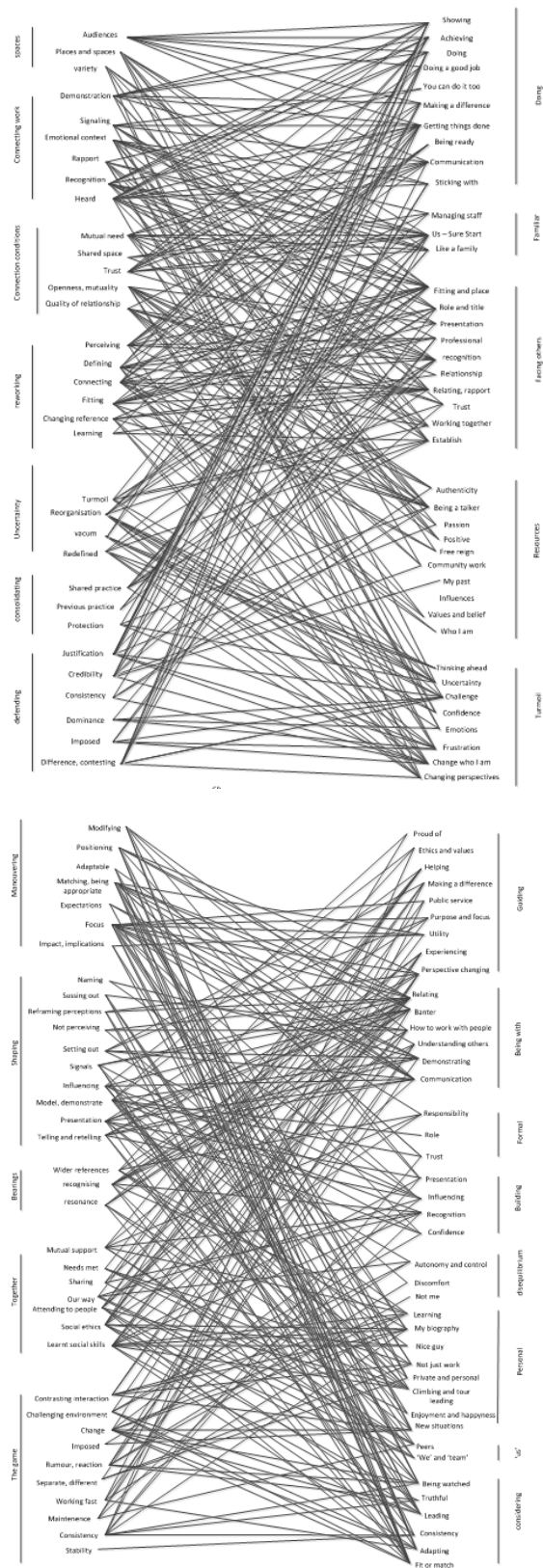


Figure 13: Second set of self-practice talk maps.



Some discussion of the rationale and approach to map production is appropriate here. My use of the term 'map' is shorthand for a way of representing relationships within and between narrative codes derived from the transcripts. Traditionally, the word 'map' is associated with cartographic artefacts, which in turn have been associated with making things governable and defined as hegemonic practice following work by Foucault (1966/2001, 1972-1977/1988) an approach to map-making which I resisted. My own maps were representations of my own interpretive work with the narrative data, and made explicit the connections¹¹ I identified following detailed and repeated work with it. In that sense, they broadly relate to other forms of visual representation such as genograms (McGoldrick, Gerson, & Petry, 2008), but given the metaphor of the conceptual *narrative space* in my previous chapter - with reference to Ricoeur's (1986/2008) ideas of 'marks' and 'traces', in texts - I turned to methodological literature on mapping, which provided the most well developed thinking on the issue. For instance, Innisfree McKinnon (in Margolis & Pauwels, 2011) recognises that there have been "fundamental transformation in the way maps are made and used" allowing for "a new air of experimentation and cross disciplinary collaboration that invites the consideration of maps across the social sciences and humanities" (p.452) resulting in "new mapping practices" (p.453).

I saw my own work as in this line with this innovation, drawing on Ricoeur who informed my conceptualisation of the narrative space; Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987/2013), whose work challenged my thinking about abstract lines and forms of organisation; Adele Clarke (2005) whose use of maps focused on "who or what matters" (p.87) and how they relate in a situation, and experiential, heuristic maps as used by William West (2001), systemic ones flagged up by Mary W. Hicks et al (1986) and therapeutic mapping as outlined by Patricia Fenner (2012) all of which work with visualisations and representations.

¹¹ Connections between codes within self-talk maps have been represented using lines of varying thickness. The varying thickness of the lines indicates (in broad terms) the relative frequency of that connection within the data. Doing this avoided adding multiple lines between the same codes which would not be seen if placed over the same path.

My rationale for the creation and use of these maps drew upon a recognition that, as McKinnon (in Margolis and Powells, 2011) says, “Visual representations do more than merely displaying what we already know; they are themselves a type of data and so produce new understandings” (p.459). This is in line with my rationale for use of visual artefacts in the conversational space: I introduced maps as a representation of my own interpretive process, with the intention that their meaning and status would ‘shift’ as they were actively used in dialogue, being incorporated (or not) into shared sense-making narratives in the sessions. This multi modal quality (where the use of artefacts transforms their status and meaning) challenges simpler categorisations offered within visual methodology literature of the uses to which maps can be used, these being for the separate uses of collecting, exploring and displaying data. The way in which artefacts cut across these categories made them highly applicable to Ricoeurian hermeneutic activity, which deals with the changing epistemological and ontological status of narrative in mimesis.

Maps were introduced to participants in session five, following a review of the transcript from the previous session and images of table top assemblages. At this stage, participants had spent quite some time in previous sessions working heuristically with individual cartoons and assemblages and we had previously discussed strategies for moving, mark making and seeing the materials. This was vital groundwork for responding to and working with the maps, which were characterised by their complex structures and had the potential to confuse participants had they not previously developed these interpretive skills. In practice, one participant struggled initially to respond to and make meaning with the interpretive maps. They were concerned with responding ‘correctly’. However, all participants quickly developed their own strategies for ways of using maps as artefacts, being clear about the scale at which they wished to look at the maps, for example. Importantly, they were reported as useful by all participants, as in this quote from Chris from the fifth session with me:

“I was going to say that as a tool it is really good to make the links, to demonstrate the links that are made, and the themes that come out of

those links, I suppose – I know it does not seem very scientific but in terms of trying to get some coherence out of...[*stories aren't about science, are they?*] No; so I think it's a very good tool cos it is...a lot we've got out of that which we wouldn't have got if we'd just read through the texts, transcripts...or even the cartoons."

In session five, Brenda was clear about how she wanted to 'see' the maps;

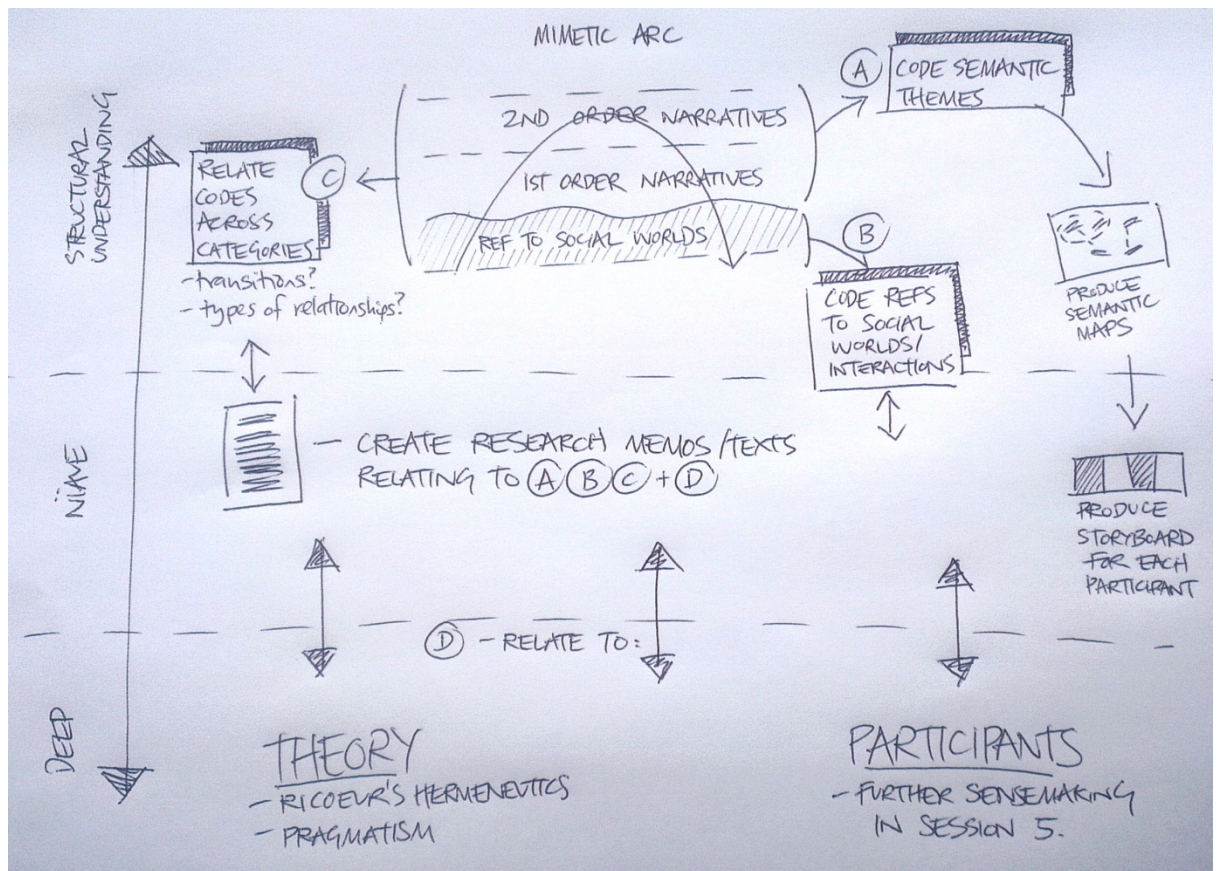
"Can I just turn it around...and squint?"

Interpretive activity within, between and beyond research conversations

I now discuss the interpretive activity that generated narrative maps of both kinds (within self-narratives and between self and practice narratives), within my overall approach to interpretation in the study. Given my study is hermeneutic, narrative data was not 'collected' because, prior to the sessions, it did not exist in that form: narratives were configured and refigured as I worked with participants. It also follows that there was not a single, separate moment of analysis of the data. At times, participants 'told' stories, or gave accounts of practices, but the activities of telling and talking about were connected inseparably. Interpretive strategies were embedded in the research conversations themselves. Examples included the *type of talk* I facilitated, and interpretive work undertaken in *responding to and working with* artefacts.

I found it helpful to think about interpretive work within, between and beyond sessions, as Figure 1 illustrates. My plan for interpretive work drew upon Ricoeur's consideration of the nature of interpretation, and the ways in which the text relates to lived experience. My starting point in developing an interpretive strategy therefore was with Ricoeur's mimetic arc as previously described with the related theoretical framework. Looking back, I realise how complex my plan for interpretive work was (Figure 14), but also that the fact that my interpretive plan included multiple activities and levels that reflected the complex hermeneutic work Ricoeur discussed.

Figure 14. Planning note created for the interpretive process.



My initial focus for interpretive work was the transcripts of sessions that I had produced, which were shaped by the use of visual artefacts. This initial focus was stimulated by the 'framing questions' contained within my study title and questions in Figure 15, below.

Figure 15. Summary of study title, framing questions and guiding questions.

| |
|--|
| <p><u>Title</u></p> <p>“Accounting for professional identity: relating identity stories and accounts of professional practice in integrated Early Years services”</p> <p><u>Framing questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “How do experiences turn into identity stories?”; and,• “How do identity stories shape on-going practice?”. <p><u>Guiding questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What does ‘professional identity’ mean to these participants; what status and forms does it take?• (How) has narrative identity developed over time for these participants?• If narrative identity is positioned as a project undertaken by participants, what is the relationship between doing and talking in that project?• Are there identifiable functions, processes or mechanisms that affect the enactment of narrative identity in this study? |
|--|

Rationale for creating initial categories of self-talk and practice-talk

The focus on self-talk and practice-talk gave me a starting point for interpreting the transcripts. Having imported all my narrative data into an analytical software package ("NVivo" 2013), I was able to create two initial broad categories along those lines: *self-talk* and *practice-talk*. I did this with an understanding that, following Ricoeur, narrative can be ‘read’ in multiple ways and narrative elements may relate in complex ways to both ‘categories’ of self-talk and practice-talk. Further, the choice to start with two large categories was itself an interpretive choice, recognising from familiarity with the data, that talk could be ‘more or less’ orientated to one or the other category. I was mindful that I *could* have created multiple codes relating to being ‘more or less’ in either category, but I considered this not necessary,

as this was simply the *beginning* of my understandings of relationships between different sorts of talk.

At this point, it was helpful for me to identify *self-talk* as narrative that more directly *identified* or *ascribed character* to the individual talking. Ricoeur identified the category of character as being one of the few which incorporated Ricoeur's idem (sameness) and ipse (acting, creative) self. Alongside this, I defined *practice-talk* as narrative that focused on interactional context for that individual, describing what Husserl (1954/1970) first identified as the lifeworld. As with all of the coding activity that followed, allocating narrative data to one or other of these categories drew upon my familiarity with the narratives. I was supported in this task because I was not dealing with texts distanced (and therefore divorced) from the original context but was, myself, part of the dialogue. This enabled me to work through a large range of meaning and intention with regard to what participants said in any given section of text. This was vital in coding to remain true to participants' meanings and intentions. On a few occasions where I struggled to recall the original context and meaning, revisiting the original recording helped decisions about whether talk related primarily to *self* or *practice*.

Self-talk: coding, map making and using maps as artefacts

Ricoeur's (1981, 1990/1994) approach to narrative hermeneutics was to move from explanation to understanding, recognising that the work of understanding a text began in understanding its structures. He offers the following insights;

"Hermeneutics, I shall say, remains the art of discerning the discourse in the work; but this discourse is only given in and through the structures of the work." (1986/2008, p.79)

"If...we regard structural analysis as a stage – and a necessary one – between a naïve and a critical interpretation, between a surface and a depth interpretation, then it seems possible to situate explanation and interpretation along a unique hermeneutical arc." (Ibid. p.117)

Beyond the obvious movement from explanation to understanding with research conversations, when it came to 'stepping back' and interpreting the

data in my study, this was my own starting point, reflected in my coding and map making efforts within the self-talk category.

The self-talk category related directly to individuals' identification and ascription of particular characteristics to themselves. As I illustrated in my literature review, many studies report 'identity narratives' of this type. This was a starting point for my own study, where I identified the need to understand the meaningful structures and pivotal themes within self-talk before examining links to practice-talk, which was the focus of my study.

Using NVivo, I reviewed all of the transcripts and created a set of codes for each participant's explicit reference to themselves. I applied the criteria looking for direct, explicit reference to personal identification or attribution of characteristics. This typically created approximately thirty codes per participant. Where a code such as "competence" was created, this referred to participant references to 'wanting to be competent' or 'like to be seen to be competent' and not just *general* talk about competence.

Once a set of self-talk codes was created for each participant, I transferred these codes into a Microsoft Visio mind-mapping package, so that I could manually draw connections between codes based on multiple close readings of transcripts. The hermeneutic activity underpinning drawing lines was therefore complex and repeated: I was able to use the search facilities within NVivo to look at occurrences of any given code and relationships to other codes. The resulting lines drawn between codes were therefore guided by associations within NVivo, but were subject to my own understanding of contextual meaning at any given point in transcripts. This ensured that I respected participants' meanings and intentions.

The mapping of relationships I identified between these codes is represented in the self-talk maps (Appendix 10.1-10.4).

Once the self-talk maps (Appendix 10.1-10.4) were created, they were used as visual artefacts; active tools within the conversational space I have previously discussed. As with the cartoons, one of their roles was to make explicit my own identification of key themes within participant self-talk

(represented in the codes) and then the relationship of these themes to each other. I presented these as things to discuss, not as 'findings' in a final sense. Use of self-talk maps then supported discussion of individual relationships between codes and also had a more abstract interpretive function, as I discussed with participants the ways in which their stories about themselves 'hung together' (for example) according to my maps. The following quotes are from participants talking about the use of self-talk maps in the fifth session:

"the links are amazing; just looking at that, they are, it's like, it jumps out, that summing up people coming up here has got a really thick line linking it to 'getting what I want'" (Sharon)

"What the main thing is that hangs it together do you mean? Positivity. Having a positive mental attitude. Because I don't think anybody could do...and experience in my shoes without being really positive."
(Brenda)

"...and it's definitely been a good thing for me with what's happened over the last year, I think this has helped a lot. Looking at it like this, this makes me feel positive. I kind of look at that and think actually, I am alright! Ha ha! That I'm not that bad! That's when I started reading the words around and thinking eeh! – that's me!" (Diane)

"And if you just zoom out so it becomes just a...you can't see the text, the links...even further out...because the further you are you can see the thickness of the links better. There is a strong link between the top left hand corner and the bottom right hand corner, on that, it's really strong, almost a solid black line" (Chris)

These quotes illustrate the way in which these maps supported participants' structural understandings of their self-talk and that participants considered ways in which / saw connections between individual narrative themes in their stories. These structural understandings of self-talk led to *participants'* evaluations about the ways in which self-talk functioned, characterised in Brenda's reference above to how her self-talk 'hung together'. Encountering these representations also represented part of the process of validation of data, as we could discuss any differences in how we remembered and interpreted narrative material. One intention in presenting these maps was to avoid returning to the beginning of the interpretation process in this session, as would be the case if I had presented original transcripts, which would have required a lengthy 'lead in' time to read and draw out themes again.

Maps avoided this 'configuring from start' scenario, and recognised my own and shared configuration activity since previous sessions. They are one of the reasons why I was able to engage in complex and reflective work so quickly with participants when we met after gaps in between conversations.

Self-talk: creation and use of summary cartoons

In addition to creating 'maps', coding within self-talk also generated a summary cartoon featuring four sequential panels. I did this with an appreciation that I could add to the representations provided by self-talk 'maps', and that an initial summarising of self-talk narratives could be done in multiple ways.

Figure 16: First set of summary cartoons.

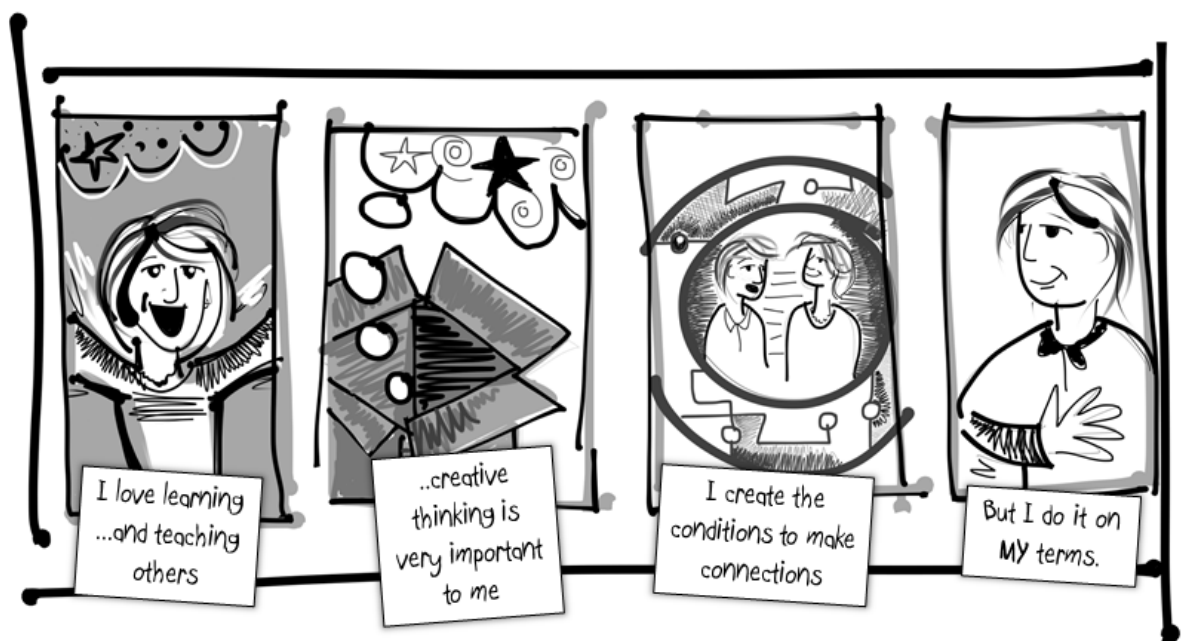
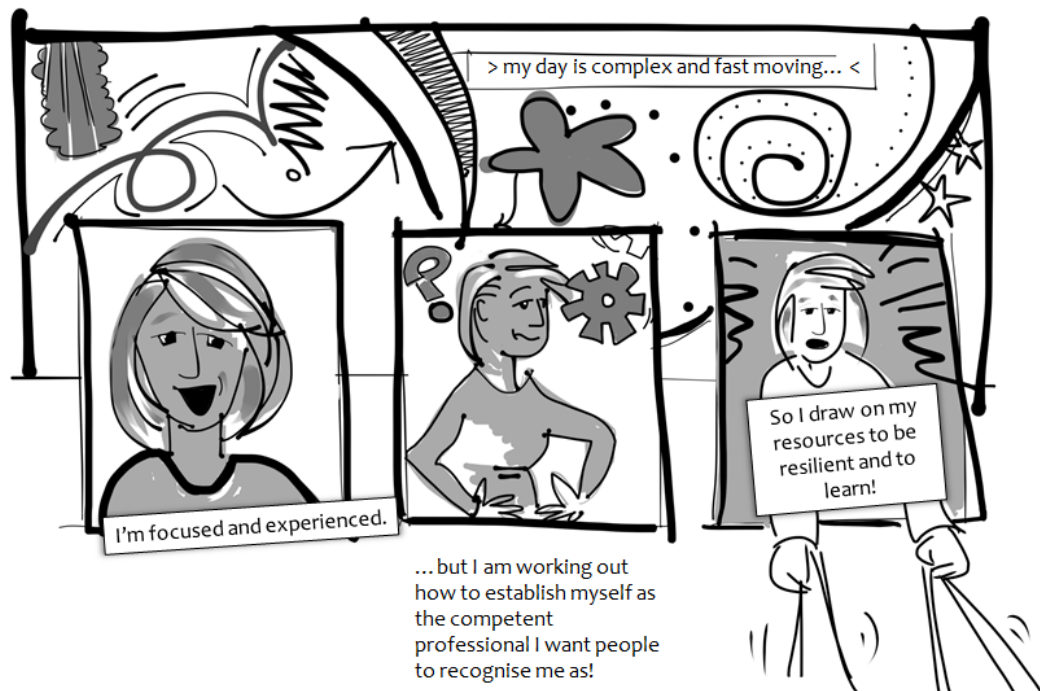
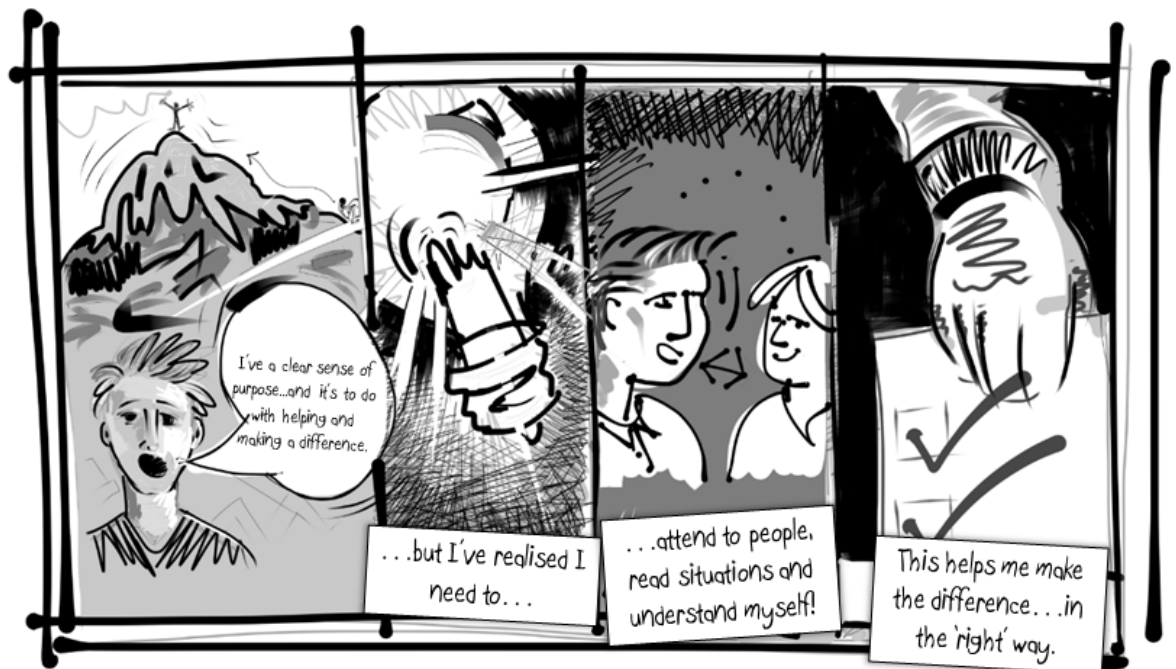
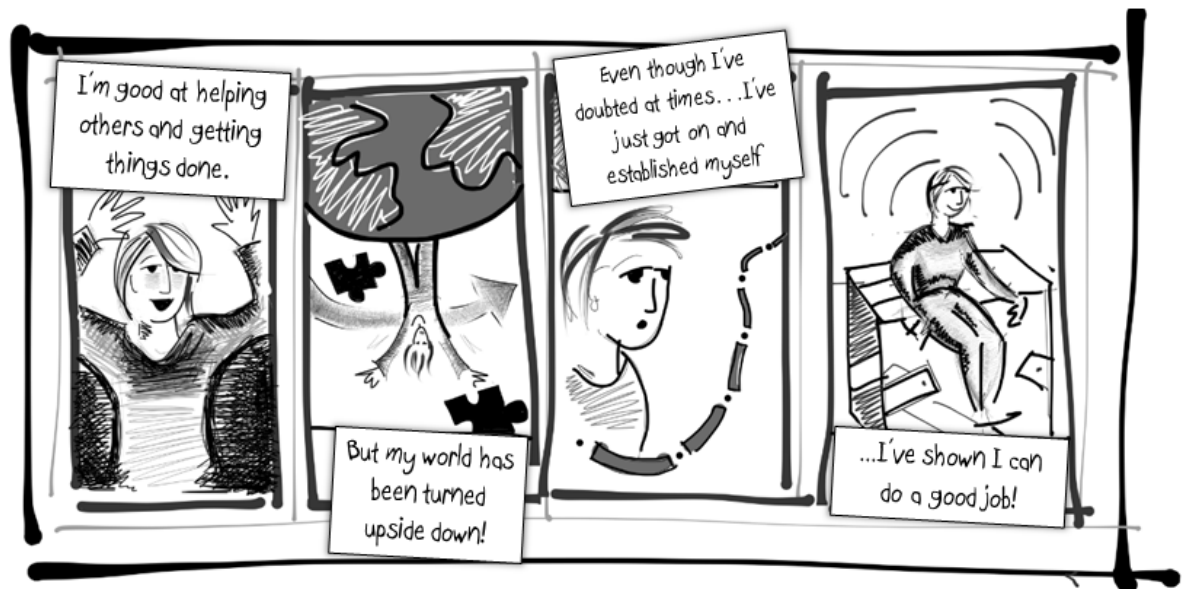


Figure 17: Second set of summary cartoons.



Whilst summarising participants' narratives in one four panel cartoon may seem reductionist, in practice I intended quite the opposite: in attempting to summarise what I saw as a major 'story' for each participant, I needed to attend to the details and nuances of the self-talk category of data. I did not claim that summary cartoon strips were 'the real story', only my current reading of it. They too were used as interpretive artefacts with participants, and were subject to careful, sometimes critical, evaluation as seen in some of these 'first reactions' to the summary self-talk cartoons from participants:

"...no: that's very true; I'm just laughing, cos I feel like...it's starting all over again!...it does!" and "when I first looked at it, I guess I'm just thinking that is just exactly how I felt, how I've felt over the last year. How I've felt again, a couple of month ago. How I know I just get on and do things, but I know I do a good job. I know that now." (Diane)

"Well, I just thought, 'It's all about me!' ...it is! I felt uncomfortable because I thought 'Ooooh'. I just thought that seems a bit...arrogant?" (Brenda)

"Um. I agree with the first one. [A clear sense of purpose] That's right, yes, the first frame....and I agree with the last two...but whether they work as a nice sequence like that, I'm not sure, whether they've come as separate..." and "this, they're laid out as a sequence, in your cartoon strip, I wouldn't say it was as straightforward as that. I would put a lot of money on that I haven't thought it through logically and come up with that as a rationale. I suppose retrospectively I can put it together, but I wouldn't say it's..." (Chris)

Using self-talk summary cartoons in the final session, like the use of cartoons throughout, had an initial 'memory jogging' role, orientating participants to the dialogue the narrative came from. Beyond that, the cartoons had a powerful emotional reaction, as participants related to the interpretation in from of them. I saw this as a complex process of evaluation that engaged participants in judging whether – or to what extent – this 'was' them, whether they would identify with it, and why. The position they took generally shaped the interpretive work that followed, so discussion of specific narrative elements (summarised in individual cartoons), photographs of table top assemblages and maps related to a theme or 'reading' reconfigured from what I initially presented. No participant passively accepted the summary self-talk cartoon, demonstrating active engagement in the sense-making process.

Coding within practice-talk, then between self and practice talk, then creating maps and cartoons

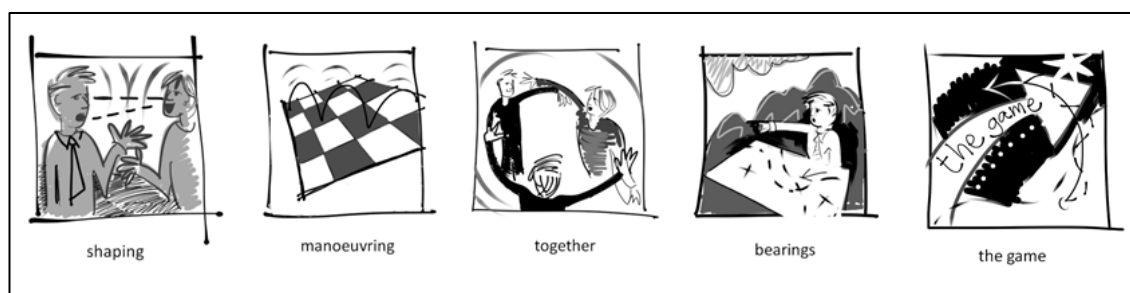
“What we learn by interpreting narratives, what is disclosed through imaginative configuration, is that human action is laced with radical meaning and orientated beyond itself.” (Schweiker, 1988 p.29)

Participants’ talk of their practices is central to this study. It is focused on understanding the ways in which practice-talk relates to the previous category of self-talk. Practice-talk was broadly related to the interactional context, the situation, or enactment of narratives. Before I could examine relationships between self-talk and practice-talk, I followed the same coding strategy within the practice-talk category I used for coding within self-talk generating approximately thirty codes within the overall category (or parent code) of practice-talk for each participant.

In addition, in setting out the practice-talk codes in one column, and the self-talk codes in another, I grouped what I saw as similar codes (within self-talk and practice-talk) together, in effect creating approximately seven parent codes for them each (Appendices 11.1-11.4). I did this because some codes had only marginally different meanings¹² and therefore benefited from grouping together and also because I considered that there may be relationships between types of codes on each side. In effect, the creation of these higher level codes represented some initial analysis and organisation within self-talk and practice-talk before mapping across them commenced. Finally, the creation of these higher level codes prompted me to draw them out as cartoons, as I was conscious that on first viewing, the maps could seem overwhelming. Talking through the cartoons was a way of introducing these codes and becoming familiar with them prior to viewing the maps. In effect, some participants moved on to look at maps quicker than others, taking different amounts of time to ‘be ready’ to view the maps.

¹² the difference between ‘working out agendas’ and ‘working out politics’ in Brenda’s self-talk codes, for example.

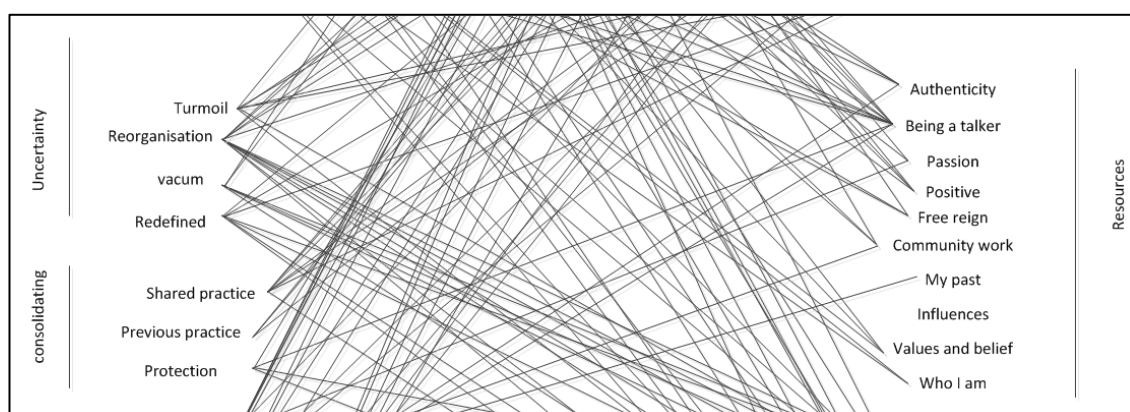
Figure 18: Example practice-talk higher level codes expressed as cartoons.



Following this process, I concentrated on mapping relationships I identified between the thirty or so practice-talk codes and the thirty or so self-talk codes for each participant. In identifying links between these categories, I used the same process which I had deployed to create the self-talk maps: I displayed both sets of codes in Microsoft Visio mind mapping software and used NVivo analytical software to explore relationships between codes¹³.

Alongside this more logical process I also found it helpful – because of my detailed knowledge of all of the narrative data – to simply work with the map and to scan between each set of codes, ‘seeing’ connections which I could confirm in NVivo.

Figure 19: Diane’s Self-practice talk map section illustrating connections.



This involved me in going beyond simple work about associations or proximities between codes that NVivo could provide, towards understanding

¹³ Raw narrative data in the form of transcripts had been coded within NVivo originally.

relationships between codes. Identifying a relationship (drawing a line) therefore took some time as I considered the cumulative references between codes. As I did this, I also actively considered the way that narrative was generally used by participants, which helped me consider the significance of their talking about one thing in relation to another.

Creating maps was therefore another aspect of my own interpretive work. They provided an organised space within which I had to identify, articulate and justify (to myself, initially) very specific relationships between codes in practice-talk and self-talk. In the initial creation of these maps, I focused on whether there was *some* sort of relationship rather than being more detailed, as I anticipated that intensive work on the nature of relationships across categories would be done after session five.

Using self-talk and practice-talk relationship maps

As with all the visual artefacts and table top assemblages, self-practice talk maps were also actively used by participants in session five. Working with the maps required the participants undertook a initial period of investigation, asking questions, clarifying and looking. By this point in the study, participants worked with the understanding that they could offer their interpretation of what was before them. Some of their initial evaluations of the process follow:

“Where does that go...it’s really interesting, isn’t it? Well...it’s because...trials and tribulations, it’s all about challenge and unpredictability, complexity...I haven’t got change in there? Maybe at the time, it wasn’t significant. It certainly would be now....and then there’s like a little...orientation and sense-making, reading context and clues and...thinking differently, analysing, drawing on experience...It’s really interesting. Mentors, opportunities...over here, recognition, feeling supported.....having a place and recognition...I don’t know. Can I just turn it around...and squint?” (Brenda¹⁴)

“Cos it all gets very dense in this area, here, in the middle. There’s an awful lot of criss crossing and going on. It’s almost like going into a void of...if it was a 3D thing it would be either mountains or there would be a ‘peak’ wouldn’t it? ...yeah, a cats cradle thing. But there,

¹⁴ edited from same sequence for brevity.

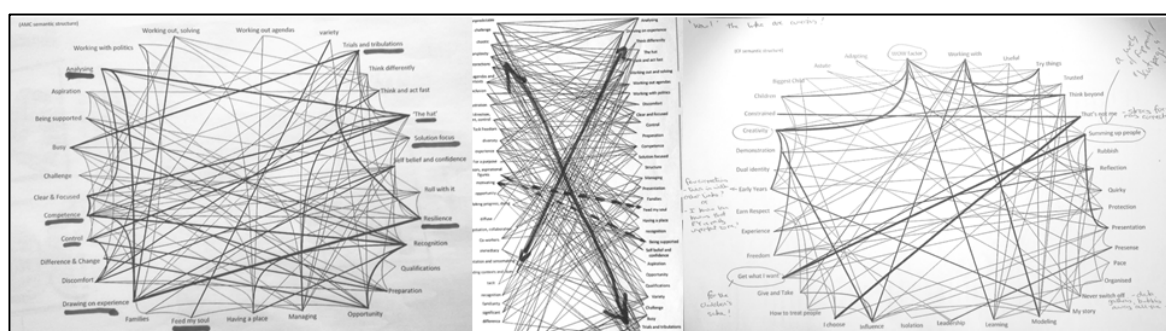
there's a lot of cross over for me. There's a strong bit coming across here, a band." and "I think these are absolutely fascinating - it's like that data, isn't it? It's when qualitative becomes quantitative" (Sharon)

"Cos it's like you can't do one without the other! ...you tell your story cos of what you've done but if you don't tell your story you wouldn't carry on doing it, almost." and "but...the doing is who I am." and "[so it bounces backwards and forwards?] Yeah, all of the time! Because I could do something and not talk about it, but I think if I didn't talk about it, I would be one of these people that would go under." (Diane)

"I was going to say that as a tool it is really good to make the links, to demonstrate the links that are made, and the themes that come out of those links, I suppose – I know it does not seem very scientific but in terms of trying to get some coherence out of..." and "what's more important is where you've got a thickness of a line...so the thickness of a line that goes from one to another, top left to bottom right, for example shows there's loads of links" (Chris)

As can be seen through these quotes from participants, once initial orientation to the self-practice talk maps had been undertaken, participants utilised them in various ways which all contributed to their own and our joint sense-making activity.

Figure 20: Annotation activity with self talk and self-practice talk maps.



As I shall discuss in the following chapter, Diane reflected on the 'bouncing' movement she identified between categories of talk, noting, "you can't do one without the other". Chris was interested in the status of the map and how it should be read and his contributions clearly demonstrate his understanding of the co-constructed nature of the sense-making work. Brenda used the practice-self talk map differently again; identifying elements on the map and comparing with her own understanding of her story. All the participants to

differing degrees noted the significance of 'bands' of associations, often connecting two higher level codes (such as 'turbulence' and 'difficulties' in Brenda's map). Whilst I suspected that the practice-self talk maps would have most interpretive value for *me* after the sessions, they also enriched and supported the sense-making process within the final session, and sensitised my subsequent work with them.

Beyond the sessions: hermeneutic work of distancing and appropriation

The five two hour sessions with participants occurred over approximately one year which enabled the creation of spaces for interpretive work within, between and beyond conversations. My discussion of interpretive artefacts within conversations has indicated their value outside of these sessions as well as within them as part of a hermeneutic process. Specifically, I identify the creation of visual artefacts as utilising what Ricoeur (1981) called "distanciation" and their use (within sessions and beyond) could be seen as an example of the hermeneutic process of "appropriation".

Ricoeur (1981) discusses the "distanciation" created in the configuration of texts and to me, I was conscious that distanciation – or 'stepping back' was fundamental to the task of interpretation or analysis and could potentially allow me to integrate, reconfigure and re-present narratives as seen in visual images I produced. The space provided allowed me to look again at data, to compare and to create sets of interpretive memos. An example of an interpretive memo is presented below in Figure 21.

Figure 21. Extract from memo work in latter stages of the study.

- There being a fine border between innovation and sedimentation, and that some sort of identity work may be going on there. It seems to be uncomfortable, and a potential source of reflection.
- Does the reliance on 'opportunity' and this being provided by others undermine self-belief?
- Experience is useful because it allows the participant to recall similarities; it has an instructional and confidence building effect.
- Here, professional 'self' is narrated into being. This narration is perhaps given a 'script' through the language of practice – solution focused practice in this case.
- Managing the performance of self – in this text – also involves explicit signalling of the rules for interaction (e.g. this is how I will appear when stressed). Does this go beyond the immediate (and simplistic) understanding of 'performance of self' and point to the maintenance of a much more sophisticated basis / environment for self.
- Generally, the 'theme' of recognition, for the participant is something that is used in interactions runs through the transcript. Recognition may be linked to several different 'sorts' of work: ensuring relevance / usefulness / things are meaningful; directing / being instructional / scaffolding understanding.
- Is there something 'getting in the way' of configuration of a meta-narrative here? (if there 'should' be one at all); I am thinking of the themes of dependence on others for support, opportunities, recognition and how they may be significant. Is it because individuals need to be active agents and 'identity work' requires 'bouncing' between self and others?
- The idea that there are representations of self (self-talk) which can be either constructive / destructive or embraced / rejected (e.g. 'roll with it' < > 'trials and tribulations') depending on context / process / perspective is worth further thought. The idea of potentiality comes in here – back to quantum physics analogies.
- Is there a hierarchy or structure of narratives? – some that frame, others that present, others explain, others more personally ascribed?

Individual pieces of interpretive work were enriched and reconfigured themselves as a result of a repeated 'back and forth' hermeneutic movement between (structural / micro / explanation) and (deep / macro / understanding) work with narratives to the actual methodology. In particular, the use of interpretive artefacts allowed me to introduce a dynamic hermeneutic movement between these types of work, bringing reconfigured narratives (themselves subject to a degree of abstraction and integration which distance supported) *back into* the conversational space.

Appropriation as a hermeneutic activity

In addition to the mechanism of distancing, which may be related to the 'configuration' phase of his mimetic arc, Ricoeur's (1981) hermeneutics

considers the implications and destination of the text, and introduces the idea of appropriation, where;

“...the interpretation of text culminates in the self interpretation of a subject who thenceforth understands himself differently...” (p.158).

I have already noted that one of the destinations of the text was in on-going dialogue as visual artefacts, which enabled participants to ‘see themselves differently’. Beyond the fifth session, I recognised that the ‘findings’ that I would be constructing reflected something of my *own* understandings, something reflected in Ricoeur’s (1986/2008) work;

“ ... the meaningful patterns that a depth interpretation wants to grasp cannot be understood without a kind of personal commitment similar to that of the reader who grasps the depth semantics of the text and makes it his or her 'own'.” (p.162)

For Ricoeur (1981), the results of work with my study participants reveal the “...world of a text...” (p.140). Using Ricoeur’s work, Tan et al (2009) consider the task of interpretation:

“...if hermeneutics can no longer be defined as a search for another person and their psychological intentions, which are hidden behind the text, and neither is it understanding merely reduced to identification of language structures, then “to interpret is to explicate a sort of being-in-the-world which unfolds in front of the text” (p140)...” (p.8)

Within – and beyond – the fifth session, interpretation is therefore not about seeking ‘hidden’ meaning but is about looking at what the text ‘points’ to. Here, the metaphor of the narrative space, with its sedimentations, marks, or patterns continued to be relevant to me. Practically, these ‘marks’ were contained in transcripts, cartoons, photographs of table top assemblages and maps. Individually, a line on a map, or one cartoon could not convey the complexity of meaning, or relationships between ‘doing’ and ‘talking’ identity; but considered together, through hermeneutic movement between them, I considered the questions of my study, pointing towards the world of the participants, as Ricoeur (1986/2008) states;

“for what must be interpreted in a text is a proposed world that I could inhabit and wherein I could project one of my ownmost possibilities.” (p.83)

Figure 1 illustrates the various elements of the interpretive process that was embedded in my methodology. Beyond the final session with participants, I faced the challenge of focusing on my research questions and moving between structural and deeper levels of understandings (Ricoeur, 1981). I was supported in this process by my public blog and my private research journal, where I reflected upon and tested my interpretations within and between different configurations of the data, as seen below in one quote from my journal:

“I am wondering if there is something about the movement between...elements at different levels in my diagram that creates narratives? Perhaps the thing I will be able to think about...is whether there are types of movement, or connections between the levels. I should be clear about whether I am suggesting movement or connection - are things transformed, or (as I suspect) do we see 'occurrences' of things at each level which are patterns of movement. Sketchy thoughts.” (Personal research journal entry, 11.7.12)

Going between original transcripts, maps, photographs of table top assemblages and archives of cartoons enabled me to identify a set of insights that related to my research questions. At this point, I began to relate structural elements (narrative elements summarised in cartoons, specific types of relationships within and between categories) to emerging ideas about how narratives functioned for participants, and how practice and configured narratives related in general. Consideration of abstract ideas (such as the configuration of stories to give meaning to actions) related to specific examples of these (e.g. Diane explaining to health colleagues her competence in preparing for an OFSTED inspection).

In summary, I have utilised the idea of movement within a conceptual narrative space to describe the hermeneutic work of my study. Clandinin and Connelly (2004) also explain the narrative research process as one which involves moving backwards and forwards through texts as explanation is sought and “...continual reformulation of an inquiry...” takes priority over “...problem definition and solution.” (p.124). They emphasise the need to move between ways or levels of understanding a text, as a rich appreciation of meaning is sought, utilising the term “analysis-interpretation” (Ibid. p.119). In Ricoeur’s work, this movement is discussed in terms of distancing

(which facilitated my own interpretive work outside of sessions) and appropriation (where interpretive work was taken back into sessions, and beyond by me). Further, movement between these two states of distancing and appropriation is the basis of movement across the hermeneutic arc (Ricoeur, 1983/1990; Tan et al, 2009, p.11) that sees narratives being configured and refigured. At a more abstract level, the activities of configuration and refiguration relate to Ricoeur's ideas of explanation and understanding. Explanation is an explanation of structure, focusing on the internal nature of the text. Alternatively, understanding results from a combination of the text with the world of the reader (participants and myself; in sessions and beyond) to form meaning (Ricoeur, 1981, p.221).

Towards findings and discussion

This methodology developed from the theoretical chapter and was designed to be used in a rich hermeneutic process with participants. I had a clear set of plans regarding methodology, but it was developed and reshaped in response to participants' engagement and my own reflective work. Designing a methodology was at times challenging, especially in establishing the status of cartoons, lines on maps and even transcripts. In addition, there were challenges in whether my reading of participants' narratives (and how they functioned) reflected their meanings and intentions.

It has not been possible, or desirable to fully divorce the process of this study with its findings: the reader has already had glimpses of participants' narratives here. Some of the work with narratives itself begins to say something about what links the questions *"How do experiences turn into identity stories?"* and *"How do identity stories shape on-going practice?"*. In the next chapter, however, I will present the results of my interpretive work detailed in this chapter which itself is a reconfiguration of memos and journal records.

Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of my study and discusses these findings in the light of the questions I have asked and the theoretical chapter of this thesis. As the previous chapter has explained, these findings have emerged from the research process as a whole, which is conceived of as a hermeneutic project.

Findings and discussion is presented in this chapter within four sections, with each section drawing on and connecting to various other points in the study¹⁵. This approach is consistent with the nature of interpretive work in a narrative and hermeneutic project, which moves back and forwards across an arc between explanation and understanding offered by Ricoeur, as parts are understood and related to the whole through movements between them. In my previous chapter, I described my methodology as co-constructed, reflexive and progressive: these are all factors that support an emergent study design.

In this chapter, I present “my story of others’ stories”. As I have positioned myself within the methodology I have described, I do not attempt to objectively record and present factual statements from participants. Instead, in recognising my own position in the study, I am required to configure my own narrative – my “story of others’ stories”. Although my methodology features co-configuration between participants and myself in conversation and joint work with artefacts, it is ultimately I who “stand in front of the text” (Ricoeur, 1983/1990a p.81; 2007) and write this chapter. My methodology addressed ways in which I have avoided the use of meaningless ‘sound bites’ not recognised by participants, or reconfigurations of narratives that bring together diverse narrative elements in an equally unrecognisable way. This has ensured that the data I have interpreted (transcripts, assemblages,

¹⁵ Illustrated in the previous chapter as Figure 1.

artefacts and maps) has retained an authentic connection to participants' meanings.

As I move forward into this chapter, I retain this view that 'any old fiction', or unrecognisable collage of narrative data will not do. Ricoeur's (1990/1994) discussion about the trajectory or destination of the text considers how *acceptable* it is to the reader (p.69). One dimension of this acceptability is whether the texts represent something that could have happened. From the readers' point of view, this judgement will, in part, refer to knowledge of individual participant biographies and overall narratives. For this reason, I present a summary of participant biographies and overall narratives in the opening section of this chapter so readers can share some understanding of narratives as they relate to individual participants. Before I do this, I address three issues that relate to presenting and discussing the narratives of this study.

'Narrative elements', 'big stories' or both?

Presentation of material in this chapter goes against the grain of many traditional narrative studies. Many scholars dealing with life story narratives typically place an emphasis upon treating narrative, as Riessman (1993) argues, these are "discrete units, with clear beginnings and endings, as detachable from the surrounding discourse" (p.17). The intention of the authors that Riessman (1993) refers to is to respect and preserve the meaning and intention of their subjects' stories. This is also my intention in this chapter, but I argue that my methodology and approach to interpretation achieves this without exclusive use of traditional participant 'stories' which often are characterised as large blocks of text with a traditional structure of beginning, middle and end: something I term 'big stories'.

The previous chapter described my methodology for this study that recognised the significance of smaller 'narrative elements', given the lack of lengthy, highly configured narratives in professional practice. Instead, over time and with participants, I have related many of these elements – seen in

the use of multiple visual artefacts and codes displayed in the self-talk and self-practice talk maps. I identify the strength of this approach within a hermeneutic context as it provided opportunities for verification and validation from participants, whose work with smaller narrative elements (often in the form of cartoon artefacts) constructed meaningful assemblages, or refigurations, of elements and provided a solid foundation from which to present these findings.

I therefore present this chapter from my own perspective, albeit one that has been richly informed by encounters with the narratives of participants. I have discussed my positioning in the study in the previous chapter through discussion of co-construction, reflexivity and method design and use. I carry through that emphasis in the presentation and discussion of findings. As the study progressed, and I moved into interpretive work beyond the sessions with participants, I increasingly gained a sense of being 'in front of the texts'. This was not to say that I objectified them in a simplistic way, but as time passed and I revisited narrative data and representations of data¹⁶. I was the one configuring narratives that became this chapter. Even if I had wished, I was not able to present a convincing set of ready-made 'big stories' given to me by participants. Despite my own tentative presentations of summary cartoons to participants discussed in the previous chapter, participants did not prioritise big stories or grand narratives about their professional identity or practices.

A note on findings and discussion

In addition to recognising and presenting narrative data in various forms, I also wish to address their categorisation as *findings* or *discussion*. In a hermeneutic study, the complex status of sense-making narratives resists a simple classification into either category. A hermeneutic process produces both narratives of *stating*, *claiming* and *telling*, which may be presented as *findings*; as well as narratives of judging, reflecting and evaluating,

¹⁶ Such as self-talk and self-practice talk maps.

traditionally associated with *discussion*. In this study, narratives can be identified as *either* or *both* findings or discussion, as they are located in an on-going spiral of narratives continually being configured and reconfigured.

One further potential dichotomy I have faced in this chapter – in addition to narrative elements versus big stories and findings versus discussion, is that of *individual* narratives and interpretive work that ‘looks across’ them in a thematic way. Other narrative traditions such as conversational analysis (Richards, 2006), or alternatively ‘life story’ narrative studies (Clough, Goodley, Lawthom, & Moore, 2004), for different reasons, emphasise the former, focusing on biographic integrity and ownership of narratives. ‘Looking across’ narratives and identifying *thematic* connections, in contrast, is suited to hermeneutic activity as the parts are related to the whole. In the theory chapter of this thesis I located myself within the hermeneutic spiral, as I co-constructed meaning with participants. This has resulted in my own unique reading of participants’ narratives, which has been informed by my ability to ‘look across’ conversations I have held with all participants.

This chapter demonstrates how individual participants’ narratives display particular characteristics, but then uses a variety of participants’ narratives *together* to discuss an emphasis on mechanisms, process and relationships upon which the questions of my study focus. From my perspective, I identify similarities, connections and themes without reducing individual practices I present to examples of ‘the same thing’ as others’ practices. I have therefore privileged the discussion of these mechanisms, processes and relationships¹⁷ over the chronological analysis of individual stories.





















As a piece of interpretive work, this chapter can be considered using the metaphor of production of a painting. Like some paintings, data has been reworked (refigured) many times to explore the specific questions I set out for the study, reflecting cycles of interpretive work. As a result, it is a painting that has many layers and many internal references. Like the self-practice talk maps introduced in the previous chapter, the chapter can be ‘read’ both in analytic and heuristic ways. Following Ricoeur’s discussion of appropriation,

¹⁷ Which relate self-talk and practice-talk.

it may be judged on the extent to which it opens up a world to the reader. Additionally, as a piece of narrative research that has others as its subject, it defends its claims to say something of their life-world that has an empirical basis.

Following this discussion about the rationale for this chapter, I now include a diagram (Figure 21) which summarises its' structure:

Figure 22. Structure of the findings and discussion chapter.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--------------------|--|--------------------|--|--------------------|--|--------------------|----------------|
|  Sharon |  Sharon | |  Sharon | |  Sharon | |  Sharon | | |
|  Brenda |  Brenda | |  Brenda | |  Brenda | |  Brenda | | |
|  Diane |  Diane | |  Diane | |  Diane | |  Diane | | |
|  Chris |  Chris | |  Chris | |  Chris | |  Chris | | |
| Individual biographical summaries | For each individual | General discussion | For each individual | General discussion | For each individual | General discussion | For each individual | General discussion | Summary |
| | Theme 1: Talking, doing and being | | Theme 2: Coherence and structure in narrative identity | | Theme 3: Narrative identity as an ecosystem | | Theme 4: Social mechanisms for the narrative self | | |

Biographical and narrative summaries for each participant

I begin each of the four sections in this chapter with material that presents interpretive work configured in the study. I then build on these findings in discussion, focusing on the conceptual insights the study has delivered. However, in order to move towards this way of 'looking across' in examination of the questions of the study, and to relate the findings to the experiences of the participants, a biographical and narrative summary for each participant follows.

Biographical summary for Chris

Chris was the only male participant, and at the time of the study was forty three and worked as a locality lead for four Sure Start Children's Centres (representing approximately 3,500 children aged 0-5 years) and also acted as multi-agency assessment (CAF) co-ordinator in a local authority in the North East of England. His day to day work was varied and included being responsible for overseeing the day to day operation of Children's Centre activities in his locality, supervising team managers, performance management, multi-agency liaison and planning, and chairing various 'team around the child' meetings to agree and arrange support for children and families. He arrived at his first session with me only a few weeks into his new post, having previously led a Children's Centre in another part of the local authority. The memory of an OFSTED inspection visit, announced a few days into his new post, and now complete, was fresh in his mind. He described working in a newly reconfigured service, with several peers in new positions with no prior experience of Sure Start Children's Centres. Chris himself had only worked in Sure Start Children's Centres for three years prior to the conversations with me.

Prior to that, Chris managed 'Extended Services' for a network of schools within that same local authority area, which he came to from a career in working with vulnerable children and young people in personal development activities in the outdoors. He was an experienced and highly qualified climber and tour leader, and had led tours internationally. In our first session and beyond, Chris talked with me about ways in which his early life experienced shaped his work practices and his personal philosophy. In particular, Chris together with family members cared for his mother, who experienced significant, and ultimately terminal, illness from his age of nine until the beginning of his university life. During the majority of that time, Chris related stories of his formative experiences in the army cadet force where he developed leadership responsibilities. Whilst at University, he developed what would be a life-long passion for walking and climbing that he used as a metaphor in our discussions of leadership and working with others. One of Chris's narrative themes that clearly connected all the sessions was his own

sense of purpose in terms of doing good and “making a difference”. He said that his early work experience post university as a civil engineer, working in an office “really wasn’t for me” as he felt the nature of the development for clients was “destructive” to the environment and economy of developing countries that were the site of ports and harbours they designed.

Chris’s talk about his work in the outdoors: tour leading and personal development work with young people emphasised his learning about dealing with people. He drew on this experience when discussing how he treated people in his current role, and was mindful of lessons learnt, including the importance of being attentive to people, and treating people equally: in short, he reported a realisation of the importance of the “human side” of climbing and working outdoors. Making a transition to working with younger children, primarily indoors, occurred for Chris through taking up a maternity post as an Extended Services co-ordinator. He discussed this as a “huge leap”, which paved the way to working with children aged 0-5 years and their families.

In his recent and current posts, Chris characterised himself as a “doer” and also presented as a determined and ethical leader. Being a leader was important to Chris, and his focus for leadership was on improving lives of the children and families in his Children’s Centre locality area. Whilst he did not claim to have a well developed professional narrative, he was mindful of positive feedback from his previous Children’s Centre, where he reported staff saying he “got things done”, “made things happen”, that he was “a nice guy”; with staff affirming that “we’ve seen quite a lot of you”.

Chris was motivated to participate in the study because he found the experience of personal and professional development on the NPQICL programme to be meaningful. He saw participation in the study as a way of continuing to consider issues of his professional practice and identity, some aspects he had only just begun to investigate. The sessions provided Chris with an opportunity to examine how his values interacted with his practices, shown through the way he contrasted the match of his personal values to his work context with those he experienced in other work places, for example. This journey of discovery was meaningful for Chris, as he noted challenges

he faced around 'reading' and understanding others. When I asked him about how he did this, he responded, "I don't know" to which I added, "we can always come back to that". This drew an emphatic response of, "No: that's the problem.....".

Across the five sessions, a number of themes can be identified within Chris's talk. He focused on relating to people in ethical ways¹⁸, and presented feedback from staff such as "he treats everyone the same and I've never met anyone like that before". Chris's narratives emphasise the recognition of others and himself in interactions, his focus on influencing others through activities such as modelling behaviours, and the strategic presentation of self, using criteria of 'fitting and matching' his own narrative and practices to others and context.

In the fourth and fifth sessions, whilst Chris struggled to see 'big stories' in his narrative, he was struck by some of his own interpretive work in session four, which involved reviewing cartoon images he had grouped together to see which sessions they had been generated in¹⁹. In his own review, Chris used this to reflect on his own consistency. He noted; "So reassuringly, so this one about the image matching reality is a good mix – I'm obviously being consistent. That's very good, I'm amazed".

My summary cartoon discussed in the final session with Chris wasn't initially recognised by him as a whole. Chris initially only saw the first, third and four panels, but he said himself that he was still putting his story together. He did note, however, that "your self-perception does not always tie up with other people's perceptions", going on to give the example of a climbing colleague who saw positive qualities in him he did not personally perceive at the time, and that "I think these sessions have helped create that story". In session five, Chris was under some pressure at work, and was challenged to orientate towards the narrative strands he had previously explored. He captured well his sensation of perceiving 'himself' or 'his story', noting "I'm

¹⁸ My words.

¹⁹ Cartoons had numbers on the back that referred to the transcript of a particular session they came from. This was done to help me sort images back into files following table top work.

still amazed at, because for me, living it, it just seems a swirling fog of a mess and every now and then I pop out of the fog!”.

Figure 23. Chris’s summary cartoon discussed in session 5.



In my cartoon summary, I attempted to configure my own interpretations of Chris’s narratives (Figure 23). I wanted to foreground Chris’s sense of ethical relating to others, and his own conscious search for sense-making practices. My own feeling was that Chris made good use of his own personal biography to define his values and approaches, but when it came to how he operationalised his identity, he still relied heavily on quotes from colleagues that might act as explanations for who he was. Rather than seeing this as a weakness, or an underdeveloped narrative self, I felt that his *enacting* of selfhood was purposeful and sophisticated, where his ‘self’ was *implied* in his practice-talk perhaps more than all other participants.

Biographical summary for Sharon

At the time of the sessions, Sharon was a qualified teacher with twenty three years of experience of working with young children. She was forty seven years old, was widowed, and had a son. Sharon presented as a warm and humorous person, whose life experiences had enriched her perspectives and ways of interacting with people. At the beginning of the research process, Sharon was employed as an Early Years Foundation Stage advisory teacher, but was also “*practically* a deputy, and seen very strongly as it, as a member of the senior management team” but like nearly all participants in this study, her role was subject to change within the broad context of the programme of budget cuts that significantly affected Children’s Centre services. Sharon told me in our second session that her current post was to be deleted, and in the third session, that she had moved from her role based within Children’s Centres to a part time role as an Early Years Development Advisor for the same local authority. Whilst this second role was based in a central advisory team, Sharon continued to have contact with a range of early years settings, including the same set of Sure Start Children’s Centres she had been based in. In both her roles, perhaps because she was a specialist, Sharon talked about a degree of independence and even isolation from peers, but clearly cherished time with children and enjoyed interactions with early years practitioners, where her professional relationships were generally advisory and development ones.

All of Sharon’s narratives connected with young children, and her passion for education and creativity was evident in all my sessions with her. In our first session, when we talked about being a teacher, Sharon said “that’s very important to me – education, not necessarily as the title of ‘teacher’ but education”. She had always worked in schools prior to her role in Children’s Centres, and broadly saw her role as being about “harnessing very young children’s energy and enthusiasm for life, because everything is new”. Sharon’s talk about childlike enthusiasm was something she seemed to appropriate for herself, and she often joked about “Who’s the biggest child?” when associating herself and her practice with childlike (not childish) qualities. Sharon used the phrase the “wow factor” which I eventually

selected to be one of her cartoons because it seemed to play such a pivotal role in her narratives. The idea of the “wow factor” seemed to build upon the idea of childlike qualities, and emphasised a sense of fascination, intrigue and effect on others. Throughout Sharon’s narratives, her “wow factor” was important to her and was not to be compromised because of roles, routines or circumstances.

“I’d like people to see that I do a good job, even though I doubt myself occasionally. Very well organised, but ever so slightly bonkers”

Sharon talked about how her personal values and characteristics were reflected in how she interacted with others. Sharon’s sociability was reflected in her comment in session one, where she noted that “colleagues in the senior management team describe me as ‘the glue’ because I’m the glue between the home visitors and the early years people”. As the sessions progressed, a theme emerged in our conversations about her influence, which defined outside of formal relationships. In session one, Sharon suggested “I’m a leader without portfolio in the children’s centre in a way, because I ‘ooze’ influence over everything”. In the sessions, Sharon reflected on why people related to her in the way they did, and how she was able to connect with people. She gave examples of being approached in everyday life as someone ‘who should know’ (my phrase), adding “I think I’m quite a strong leader, one of these people that if there’s a queue at the busy stop they’ll come and ask me”. She attributed this to several things, including the personalised attention she paid to others, saying things like “it’s being the fabulous girl, it’s being, going, that extra mile...effortlessly without it being seen as a chore, or you’re doing it because you genuinely want to help that person”.

The idea of influence was part of a greater narrative about Sharon’s agency, choice and intention. Even though her role did not formally come with a head of centre title, Sharon saw her leadership as more than position when she commented that “I am always going to be there, and I *will* influence”. Sharon applied the same determination to the roles and situations she was placed in: this was particularly relevant as she went through the redundancy process

and reflected on the potential of working in a more formal advisory function. Sharon had previously identified her choice to leave the formal school environment, telling me “I’ve jumped and I’ve chosen ..to have my freedom a little bit”, and talked with frustration about the record keeping aspect of her role in the Children’s Centres. When facing on-going changes to her role which might conflict with her stated focus on creativity and freedom, she was willing to see what this meant for her, adding “I think that’s because I know I can just walk through that door and not come back”.

Sharon talked about her own practices, and focused on the ideas of being reflective and attentive. She was focused on teaching, influencing and motivating others – from childcare practitioners to head teachers, so was very conscious of her own presentation to others in different situations. Sharon talked about interactions in a purposeful way, and made children a point of reference, often as a way of diffusing other people’s agendas or perceived egos. She talked about encouraging others to reflect, and said “I wouldn’t be me without reflection”. Being attentive was used to notice things she could appreciate or remember (with practitioners) or to record things where she needed to defend herself or her practice. In talking about team meetings with peers, she said that;

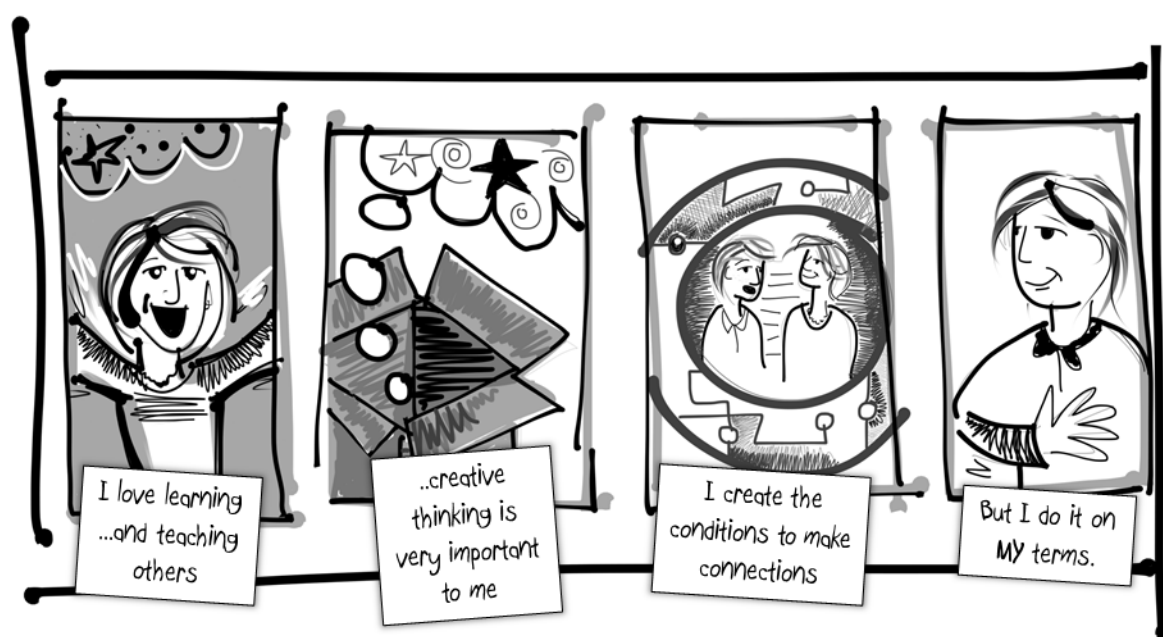
“people know that [I] will take notes, [I] will take copious notes, and if you want to ask [me], [I] will almost give you back, verbatim what you’ve said so watch out, cos if you try and say anything contrary, out will come the notebook – oh, at the last meeting, you said...”

Despite being reflective, Sharon’s narrative reflected a practical orientation. The idea of demonstration was important, so Sharon showed who she was to people, often to inspire trust. When asked about what was important about her work with others, she said it was “Me demonstrating. It’s built up their trust over time”. Sharon’s talk about her leadership reflected things that she said were personally important to her, but not all aspects of her personal life and preferences were deployed in practice.

Sharon was highly engaged in the final stages of the study and, like all of the participants, was quickly able to group and associate cartoon images, text and her own annotations in the table top assemblage in session four. In this

analysis, Sharon placed elements that said, “This is me” together centrally in her table top assemblage. These included reference to the “wow factor”, “wouldn’t it be boring if everything went right all the time” and “who’s the biggest child?”. She associated these themes most closely with “me”. In addition, Sharon grouped a set of themes including “I’ve jumped and I’ve chosen to have my freedom a little bit” and “wouldn’t it be boring if I was always the same” into what she called “the dodgy corner”. Whilst she was clear that this was not the focus for presenting herself, she discussed these themes in terms of her own freedom to choose, and to have her “escape tunnel” if it “did really, really get on top of me”. Sharon also created another group of cartoons that talked about the sort of person she was in interactions with others. This included narratives about influence, remembering others, encouraging and child focus.

Figure 24. Sharon’s summary cartoon discussed in session 5.



In my cartoon summary for Sharon, produced as part of my analysis of self-talk data following session three, I reflected many of these themes. The cartoon reflects the focus on learning, innovation and creativity, facilitated and defended by Sharon.

Biographical summary for Brenda

At the time of the sessions, Brenda was 48 years old and had twenty nine years of experience of working with children and families. She was married with two teenage children and had elderly mother who lived independently but whom she cared for. Brenda worked as a senior Family Support practitioner within a national voluntary sector charity and had various thematic leadership roles across a locality of Sure Start Children's Centres, ran by a large voluntary sector organisation. She worked thirty hours over five days, and her busy lifestyle formed a context for her narratives. In our first session together, in between discussion of the things she managed to achieve, Brenda talked about ways in which she focused and that she was "trying to concentrate on the things I have control over".

Brenda was a family support specialist, with expertise around safeguarding and mental health, having established herself as someone with extensive practice experience. As with all participants, Brenda experienced on-going changes within her organisation as a result of funding reductions and reorganisations, and spoke frequently about how her professional and personal life was busy and unpredictable, and how she managed that.

Brenda's professional biography started as a nursery nurse working with children with disabilities, and following the commencement of industrial action by the National Union of Mineworkers in the mid nineteen eighties, Brenda was quickly drawn into family support and family welfare work with a focus on supporting parents. Brenda reflected on how busy this period in her professional life was and how, in her current role, she still relished change and variety, which was a theme she would return to in most of the sessions with me. Comments such as "I like being challenged, I like a busy day" were common in our conversations. In addition to being busy, Brenda talked about herself as someone who thrived on variety, saying humorously "I'm a tapas person. I like lots of different things, and new things I like to try". One other feature common to all of her narrative was her association with problem solving, typified in her comment that "I just like unpicking things as well, I like the challenge of that".

Brenda made sense of her professional self through the lens of experience. She had worked with parents and families in many different situations, but reflected that because she needed to stay in work, she did not gain a standard professional qualification in social work or therapeutic practice; instead she “had to wait for opportunities for training along the way, and people who are willing to ...coach you”. Her narrative made frequent reference to “significant adults”, people who “valued what you were saying, valued your opinion, could see your expertise”. She talked about key individuals who had provided the coaching she mentioned: she wished to be like them because she said they were “...quick thinking, they’re innovative, they’re like they know what they are talking about, they are very clear and concise; they function well in a meeting, you know.”. Brenda explained how career and her professional identity were shaped by people such as those who were “Giving me opportunities, letting you work outside your comfort zone, which I thrive in”. As a result, she attributed some of her personal strengths to the idea of resilience and the ability to “roll with it”. She added on one occasion the comment that “I just think ‘well, I can just do anything now’...”, and reflected with me in several sessions upon her ability to draw on experience to think about herself and to inform her practice.

Brenda’s talk of experience was often linked to themes of responsibility, self-belief and recognition. From her early career experiences in working in family support centres in the miner’s strike, she talked about her aspiration to be a manager, noting, “I don’t think I ever set out to be anything else than a manager. That’s the only thing I knew I wanted, I wanted to manage”. In her current role as a team manager and thematic lead in a large group of Children’s Centres, she reflected on her management responsibilities with a mixture of confidence and some recognition of insecurity. When we talked about occasions where she was pleased with her presentation, she recalled her work in child protection conferences, saying this was evident “particularly when I have to go to initial conference that’s one where I feel that I do meself justice, really in that I do pride meself in that I am very clear in that what we can offer, and how we can offer it and show an understanding of the family, and present meself very professionally”.

When Brenda questioned her own narratives, these did this through reflecting on how effectively she was living up to her goal of being like those she aspired to. She said that “I do have a vision of how it’s going to be, of how I would like it to be, and it needs to be....clear and task focused.”. Towards the end of our conversations, this was summed up by the idea of competence. Like other participants, Brenda had been subject to several processes of organisational change in a very challenging time for those working in the sector. She reflected, “I like competence, and I like feeling competent, and I like feeling confident, I like to be recognised for it, I like to be seen to be seen as that, and I aspire to people who are like that”. Brenda worked hard to be professional at work, and to be seen as competent, especially in the face of a challenging work context.

Where we talked about working in meetings with peers both inside and outside the Children’s Centres environment, Brenda reflected on her competence and presentation. Whilst she talked about how she presented well at child protection conferences, she recognised that this had taken time to establish. This was reflected in her relationship with the chair of this particular meeting, where she described the presentation of her competence as “building up, like a relationship, but he knows what I do and I know what he does, we have a shared knowledge of what each others’ role is in that meeting” which in turn brought benefits in terms of “an understanding of each other in the room”. Brenda talked with me about things that frustrated her about senior management meetings. On one occasion, she reflected on a meeting where she had received multiple interrupting questions whilst explaining a particular intervention. Like all participants, we talked about how her own story was affected by others; in this case, causing her to question the narrative she used around focus and clarity. Brenda concluded that she “...need[ed] to feel connected to people”, and wondered that “[I] honestly think sometimes I don’t think fast enough”.

With families, and with her own team, Brenda talked about her focus on influencing, teaching and collaborating. In this context, her own self-talk was less about presenting a ‘script’ about herself than appropriately revealing herself and using anecdotes as part of a pedagogic process; talking about

team meetings, she added, "I'm the leader, and I come with lots and lots and lots of experience, I don't think I'm the be all and end all". Throughout all of our sessions, Brenda emphasised meaningful connections with people. In session four she said, "I don't want to come in, look at a screen and come home. I need to feed me soul, and I need to feed other people's souls as well".

We had lots of interesting discussions about how Brenda maintained both her day-to-day practices and her self-talk. Brenda spoke repeatedly of what she called her "Trials and tribulations", referring to her fast moving, often chaotic and unpredictable working days. This became a cartoon which would have a central function in her table top assemblage in session four.

Reflecting this, Brenda's practice-talk included reference to ways in which she organised and composed herself. One such example was her reference to what she called "The hat", which she explained was a mode of focusing at work that removed emotion from pressured decision making processes.

Brenda offered different examples of occasions where she used this (metaphorical) hat. Use of "The hat" was one aspect of Brenda's practice-talk that related to the theme of structure. For Brenda, finding ways to structure her work allowed Brenda to compartmentalise and deal with discrete sets of issues.

One further theme that emerged towards the end of our sessions, as we reviewed narrative material, was that of resilience. Brenda said that;

"I think in the last twelve months I have become really hard. I just want to use a really simple word: hard...I just...I have had so many things thrown at me I think in the last twelve months, I think it has been the hardest year I have ever put in. Both professionally and personally: on all fronts. I think on a day to day basis I have managed really well but if you looked back on it, you know if you have time to reflect back on it, I actually don't know how I've done some of this stuff because I have had so many things going on....and so I must....have grown"

When working with her table top assemblage in session four, Brenda recognised and took ownership of most of the cartoons. Brenda placed the cartoon about 'Trials and tribulations' at the top, as it formed a context for her own stories. She created a group of cartoons about recognition and

aspiration, and a further set which she named “who I am and how I work”, which contained narratives on her preferences and her strategies. Brenda grouped a further set of images around the idea of “everything that I have used from the past to enable me to work the way I do so”. When asked if she had any ‘big stories’ she listed “self-belief and confidence”, and drew attention to the idea of “ambition and aspiration”.

Figure 25. Brenda’s summary cartoon discussed in session 5.



Her self-talk summary cartoon (Figure 25) drew many of these themes together. She seemed to have one set of narratives that were well developed and rooted in a history of practice with families. At least one other strand of narratives reflected the ambiguity of her professional narrative and reflected the idea of ‘becoming’ present in the idea of a journey with opportunities and coaches.

Biographical summary for Diane

At the time of the study, Diane was forty years old and worked as a Principal Family Support Worker, with a lead on community development, for a set of Sure Start Children's Centres. Diane's role and activities were subject to one of the most disruptive sets of changes over the course of the study, with several phases of seemingly chaotic reorganisation. She entered her current role after returning to study full time at University; she said, "I went travelling, come back had a baby, went to university – did everything backwards" and she was involved in the 'early days' of establishing Sure Start Local Programmes, the precursors to Sure Start Children's Centres. She presents as down to earth, friendly and positive (in session three she told me that "I like open and honest", on several occasions that she arrived at work happy, and she laughed as she told me on several occasions that "I think with me I talk a lot..."). Diane's narratives over the course of the sessions focused on establishing herself and her 'Sure Start' colleagues within the new organisational structure and politics, and questioning the relevance of her professional story. For several years, her professional identity had been rooted in being a member of the Sure Start community, which she regarded as a source of support, powerfully summed up in session three in the imagined invitation to "come and see our family and see how we all work together".

Diane suggested in our first session that her first manager "moulded me into what I am now", and valued her first managers' approach to support and community work. She was confident about her ability to apply herself to many situations, having spent lots of time in the 'Sure Start' context: she told me "I do a lot of different things and I can develop things and it changes all the time". Diane explained to me how her presentation to parents and professionals needed to be different, focusing with parents on her own biography. Specifically, Diane talked about beginning to work with parents, who could be sceptical - "I have been a single parent, I have been in the same position as you I've grown up on a council estate, I'm no different to anybody else" and that "you can be whatever you want to be and it's never too late".

Diane's narratives were characterised by her focus on being able to connect and to work with people, which depended in part on her openness, and willingness to build reciprocal relationships. When she said that it "takes a certain type of person to be able to work in the community", she referred to these qualities. Diane was who she was because of how she was with others, and her practice-talk reflected this; referring to work with parents, she said "It's like working for them, really, getting to know them, telling them who I am and what I've done", this translated into her approach to professional collaboration which was "'right this is what I do, what do you do, what we're going to do together?'...".

Diane's professional identity, and the currency of her skills, was called into question in the creation of a new integrated service on the part of the local authority. Whilst this was occurring, we talked about how she introduced herself and Diane highlighted how important it was to her that her generic job description did not obscure her focus on community development "because people don't realise that we all do different jobs". A slate had been wiped clean, and the people who needed to know about her, knew nothing. Through all of the sessions, we talked about the chaotic organisational context that Diane described, and her feeling that "somebody needs to take a lead".

In addition to the idea of chaos, we talked about the increased influence of other professional cultures and how this affected her talk about herself. Diane told me that "I don't want to sound awful, but the managers are either from connexions or health and they have no idea about my world"; what was worse, newly influential professional cultures did not seem to 'fit' with her ways of being, or the 'Sure Start' approach. In frustration, Diane recalled a story which talked about the idea of competence, where a health colleague enthused, "'Ohh, she was a brilliant ward sister!'" and all this and I'm like: yeah, but you can't, can't work in a Children's Centre like you're sister of a ward, it's completely bloody different!". Diane's conversations with me often seemed to be trying to make sense of how she could relate to this 'other' culture, or even the idea of a vacuum, with no initiative seemingly being taken by senior managers. Diane went on to say "it's almost you're having to

fight your corner” and “carve out your own role within how that’s going to fit with everybody else [and..] justifying”.

The effect of this was to shake the foundations of Diane’s professional narratives. Diane talked about how her established ways of working had been disrupted, and that “before all this integrated team started, I kind of felt me place”. Her practice-talk referring to before the reorganisation reflected the trust built up through a history of working together. Now she was part of a major reorganisation, Diane now said “I knew where I was going, and to be quite honest, now...I really don’t know. I don’t know if there’s any future in that anymore which is quite sad”. Part of her response was reflected in our conversations, where Diane explained her need to focus on talk of *role*: “I feel as if I have to claim that role, ‘this is what I do’...”. She also felt she was protecting work done ‘as Sure Start’ which she felt was not recognised in plans for a new service.

Diane’s new reality gave us lots to talk about: she used the conversations to reflect on what was going on, what was important to her and who she was in what she often felt was “chaos”. Her normal ways of collaborative being and doing was interrupted by what she called “all this hierarchy”. Despite the necessity of role talk, Diane insisted that a strategy that simply said “this is me” was not sufficient. I created a cartoon called “you need them to work with you” which Diane used in the second session as a way of emphasising the requirement for relationship as a way of identifying social resources. She was positive about being a resource to others, remembering, “when I’m working with people what I know, then they’ll take from me what they need to get”.

Over the course of a year, Diane had to re-establish her professional self in a new context, and to support her staff to do the same. Health colleagues featured in her narratives in problematic ways, with Diane commenting that “I think they’ve just had this idea that we basically do nice play things with children and do nothing else – they didn’t understand the targets we have to work towards, they didn’t understand OFSTED, they didn’t understand all the

hard work we have to put into the SEF²⁰ and you know, all the outcomes and all the evidence..”. Standing on the sidelines in our sessions, Diane saw others “stamp their feet and make the most noise”; in response, her practice-talk emphasised the need to be heard. Her response was that “If I tell people, and I do a good enough job, and I get myself out there and getting known.. that people will see the good work that you’re doing and let you almost kind of get on with it and take what they need”.

As well as reflecting her determination to demonstrate what she saw as her strengths, Diane’s narratives reflected some self-doubt. She said that “I think I do a good job and I am who I am and I’ve got where I am because of my hard work and they need to recognise...who I am!” but also returned to a theme of questioning *what* she wanted and what *sort* of person she was. Diane worried that “I don’t always know if people in leadership positions see me as professional”, considering whether she needed to move away from “being a talker” or (as we joked) “dead common” to do this. Towards the end of our conversations, Diane became more convinced that she did not. In session four, her post had been upgraded in the reorganisation and she felt her competence had been recognised. For Diane, the theme of being “true to yourself” was significant. When Diane reflected in session four, she noted “I think that it has shown that I am quite adaptable, and I will, I do think I fight for what I believe in and I think that I’ve worked hard...to keep my professional identity, cos I think obviously somewhere, in the back of me head, I knew that that’s what...that that was important!”. She was able to return to the recurrent theme in her narrative about doing a good job and being “a good worker”, where “I don’t have to change who I am because ‘proof is in the pudding’ almost and that’s...that’s maybes just something about me, that’s what I look for, recognition?”.

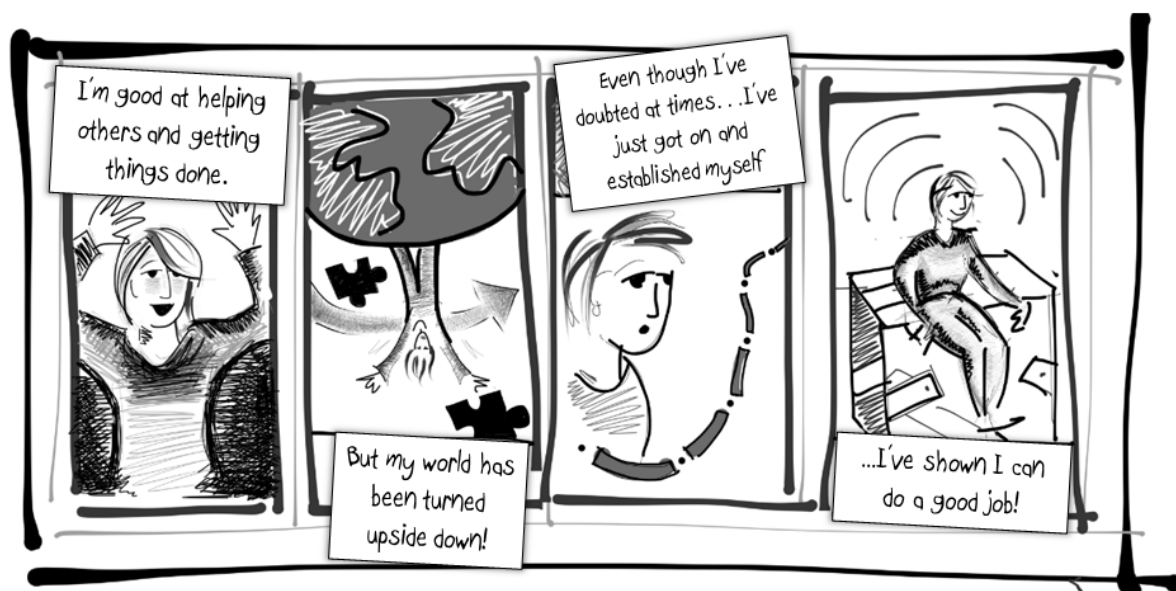
In the table top assemblage, Diane created groupings that broadly reflected her ‘approach’ and preferences, her talk of wanting recognition and to ‘fit’. When arranging her practice-talk images and phrases, Diane recognised the catalytic role of new, potentially uncooperative or hostile colleagues and the

²⁰ Self Evaluation Framework (SEF): documentation used by settings prior to OFSTED inspection.

challenge of OFSTED in the development of her professional narrative. Reflecting on how OFSTED had allowed her to show who she was to new colleagues, she recalled thinking “This is my moment!”. When I asked if her stories about herself would have been the same without this, Diane replied that “the whole experience of our service reorganisation has allowed me to tell my story because it’s made me think about who I am, where I stand professionally, what I do.”

In my last session with Diane, her post was potentially to be made redundant again. Diane told me “I have come full circle” and was able to read her narratives from a ridiculous, and comic, perspective. We talked about how putting together stories was useful in facing her uncertain future. She replied; “I think I’ve probably recognised those feelings and talked about them. Whereas if I hadn’t been...and I think I said at the beginning I said I think this could be quite therapeutic because I can think of it as like a counselling session, almost cos I’ve just talked! ...I can read back through the transcripts – ‘Yep! Yep! I recognise that, that’s where I...’ ...where I’m at now!”

Figure 26. Diane’s summary cartoon discussed in session 5.



When I asked Diane what told her that the summary cartoon ‘rang true’, she said “Because when I first looked at it, I guess I’m just thinking that is just exactly how I felt, how I’ve felt over the last year. How I’ve felt again, a

couple of month ago. How I know I just get on and do things, but I know I do a good job. I know that now.”. When talked about Diane’s self-practice talk map, and connections between the higher level practice-talk codes of ‘connecting work’ and the self-talk codes of ‘turmoil’, Diane saw this in another way, as she said “...but that would make sense, though, wouldn’t it?...the turmoil, in some ways...the turmoil was...finding my place. The restructure was the connecting...the work, I guess that’s where the turmoil did come from. Who am I? What am I going to do? What’s my place in this? People need to know who I am...”.

Thematic findings and discussion

I now move on to present then discuss a set of findings from my study. As previously stated, I begin with presenting key findings from data associated with *individual* participants; I then go on to discuss strategies, patterns, movements and concepts that are demonstrated *across* participants’ narratives.

Findings and discussion theme 1: *Talking, doing and being*

In this section, I present the idea of early years leadership as an organic project. Specifically, I discuss findings that show participants’ narrative identity developing as there mimetic activity matures, or builds, in time. Consequently, I discuss material from my study that focuses on what I identify as the complex, dynamic lifecycle of narrative identity. I shall highlight the ways in which narrative identity is shown and told, and how clearly ascribed self-talk has emerged from multiple cycles of mimetic activity, using and transforming resources as it does so.

Chris: *Talking, doing and being*

Chris's stories about himself clearly emerged and matured over time. For example, some of his narrative themes seemed to have their origins in his early experiences in the army cadets: however, in constructing the biographical aspect to his self-talk, Chris used talk about formative experiences to select and interpret subsequent experiences. Therefore, his talk about taking on responsibility, being surprised at revelations about himself and a focus on practical organising and achieving are emphasised in later narratives as he establishes strands of consistency in his self-talk.

For Chris, well-developed narrative elements (telling) have a clear relationship to practice (showing). This is evidenced in Chris's relatively well-developed narratives regarding his "values". Chris's practice-talk, for example, addressed the idea of improvisation, but he was clear that this improvisation needed to be grounded in values, which were ascribed to him and part of his self-talk. Consequently, Chris's practice-talk and self-talk about ethics or values relied on the other, where 'being ethical' needed some explanation and talking about values required demonstration.

Some aspects of Chris's self-talk take time to emerge as they drew on feedback from others on his practices. This is highlighted when he received feedback on his lack of interaction with walking groups, and when staff from his previous setting said he "got things done", "made things happen" and that he was "a nice guy". Chris seemed to rely heavily on evaluative feedback from others: he expressed difficulty in "reading and understanding others" which he identified as a "problem". Once Chris was able to configure narratives, he clearly drew on them in practice, but did struggle with working out what these were in the first place. This illustrates that the narrative self is a complex configuration that takes time, indicated as Chris told me "have I got a story? ...I'm developing one" and his frustration in session five where he said "for me, living it, it just seems a swirling fog of a mess and every now and then I pop out of the fog!", reflecting the significant challenge he and faced in developing and maintaining his self-talk as this relied on making connections to practice over time.

Finally, the temporal dimension to the development of narrative selfhood was clear for Chris in terms of having *goals* and in the idea of *consistency*, with arguably the former relating to practice-talk and the latter self-talk.

Sharon: *Talking, doing and being*

Self-talk also clearly had a complex 'life cycle' for Sharon, where she was involved in cycles of telling and showing, and identified, adapted and applied narrative resources in strikingly conscious ways. Sharon spoke about "experiences of experiences" to convey a reflexive awareness of her own narrative resources as they had developed over the course of her career. The idea of career itself provided a temporal context for Sharon's stories, where it acted as an organising frame, allowing Sharon to identify and select resources from her past and anticipate future changes. Sharon's talk about moving from school based teaching to Children's Centres, and later, when facing the move to the advisory service, both acted as a trigger for new or reconfigured narratives about "I've jumped and I've chosen to have my freedom a little bit" in the case of the former, or about her management and control of situations in the latter.

Sharon's talk about advising childcare practitioners provided several examples of narratives that emerged over time as she coached staff. In most of our sessions, Sharon would describe or reflect upon ways in which she remembered and noted things about staff, and how she used this genuine, but purposeful, interest to facilitate staff learning. In this narrative strand, Sharon's practice-talk and self-talk formed a symbiotic relationship where she showed and told who she was.

Over the course of our sessions, Sharon configured narratives about recognising and noting narrative resources. When we discussed how her experiences turned into stories, Sharon said that what was important was "recognising the key elements of a story, of an experience", adding;

"it's about how to identify the key elements of that experience that makes it pertinent, that makes it worth storing. I mean yes, there's lots

and lots of experiences in teaching and in Children's Centres, I could tell you all sorts that would be not worthwhile because I haven't had....limited impact."

In these exchanges, I gained an insight into the early stages of narrative configuration for Sharon, which relied on identifying previously configured, but not well developed narrative elements, then assessing their potential for use. In our fourth session, she was clear that "The key thing with your stories is choosing the right bit of which story to tell to whoever you're talking to. It's not telling the same story to everybody. It's telling the story appropriately". Additionally, when Sharon talked about "choosing" she said she had to "Isolate the elements of an experience to...identify those that have impact on the quality". Reflecting on this conversation, and annotating the table top assemblage, Sharon suggested that the metaphor of a toolbox could be used to consider the process of noting and evaluating potential narratives.

Sharon's ability to reveal her professional self to others seemed to be linked to previous experiences of selecting, adapting and improvising practice and self-talk. When we talked about how she worked with a range of individuals, from childcare practitioners to head teachers, Sharon was clear about what needed to be selected, and how it should be deployed.

Her presentation to head teachers was particularly telling, as what she was 'selling' was not simply a service, but was *herself*. In our first session, we talked about presenting herself to head teachers: Sharon gave her job title, and added;

"...and then, what I find works is if you have a twinkle in your eye. He he heh! Because.. that's.. you're the human.."

To this she added,

"but then I have my little magic smile, and that seems to work. I think it's having that aura as well, if you go in as a very dour person with that, but if you say the title with a smile and say 'that's a fabulous title, isn't it'..."

She explained this as,

"Yeah, that's just the wrapper [the *wrapper*] but wait 'till you get to know the girl, you're just going to love me!"

Finally, Sharon notes that although she has the formal, assessment and advisory elements to her role, through this presentation, she says - “I get to be me”. In this case, ‘being me’ is made possible through sophisticated signalling and judged used of humour, developed over time through many interactions with others.

Brenda: *Talking, doing and being*

Brenda’s self-talk and practice-talk seems to be the process and product of cyclical movements between showing and telling. Her practice-talk includes reference to her journey talking “a long time”, where her aim has been the recognition of her competence from others, perhaps in the absence of traditional qualification routes (such as social work) in family support work. In this extended construction of herself as a competent professional, Brenda’s reference to “drawing on resources” is included in my summary cartoon, where she identifies and selects things as “significant” in that they are relevant to any given situation, including what she calls “diverse people and situations”. Brenda talks about “trials and tribulations”, both in terms of her everyday experience, but also in terms of a characteristic of her life, suggesting to me that your “brain collects all of that”; indicating her awareness of potentially useful narratives which exist in various stages of configuration.

In addition to the gradual accrual of experiences that the biographic element of her narratives focus on, featuring cycles of telling and showing, Brenda’s stories also highlight how *events* triggered the configuration of narratives. In session four, when Brenda talked about first attending solution focused training, an approach that features regularly in her narratives, she said “when I did the training, it was almost like a little light blub went on and I thought...actually, I do that, I do behave in that way, I do talk like that”. The solution focused training provided a focal point upon which Brenda could configure a solution focused narrative, drawing on pre-existing ways of talking about helping people.

Brenda's focus on practice expertise, and her coaching role with family support practitioners draws involves her in drawing on her own practice experience. This is obviously something that has developed over time, but not in a passive way. She identifies things that are relevant, and in this context, these are the narratives that have been regularly used and adapted as 'tools'. When I asked her in the fourth session which of her stories she shared, Brenda said;

"I choose what's appropriate, really, like it has to be in a context of what you're talking about, for instance we were talking about lone working and so I shared my experience of being on the [name of estate] and some of the things I'd experienced, positive and negative and then that enabled us to look at safe lone working"

Her focus, she explained, was not primarily about self-disclosure, but coaching;

"to enable something else to happen, so if you sharing it, it's because you want them to think about the situation they were in and how they would do it differently, or you want them to think about it in terms of...enhancing their own knowledge"

She added;

"...the stories I tell are around families are for a purpose. I wouldn't talk about my self-belief story, or my confidence, or something around those stories, unless it was...elicited."

Telling stories of experience clearly has an instructional purpose here, but more personally ascribed talk of *being experienced*, linked in turn to more intimate themes of self-belief, confidence and resilience, does seem to *draw upon* the practice of using personal stories for this purpose. '*Drawing on experience*' (or being experienced) is clearly one of Brenda's strongest self-talk themes, as represented by its multiple connections on her self-talk map. Seemingly, Brenda is able to configure relatively more personal talk about experience, and thereby self-belief, confidence and resilience because she *already* uses her stories of experience in a different way in practice. Therefore, development of either practice-talk and self-talk seem to support the configuration of the other.

One aspect of this theme is the focus on sustained mimetic activities – stories’ life in on-going cycles of configuration and refiguration. This is hinted at in another way in my third session with Brenda: I asked her a question about her beliefs and values, and at first thought she had misunderstood the question. In fact, Brenda was emphasising how ways of talking and thinking sometimes need attention;

“I think they can stop you from, em, pushing your thinking on? ...do you know what I mean? ...you know, stop you from thinking outside the box sort of thing – sometimes can make you feel a bit rigid in your decisions sometimes [So is it that you have patterns of thinking that sometimes become a bit habitual?] Yeah, yeah. That’s it, yeah. Like what you’ve always done, definitely, and I think sometimes you have to push yourself to be different”

This quote highlighted to me the *dynamic* nature of narrative identity, drawing attention to the necessity of self-talk to be relevant – or ready to be refigured back into practice. Brenda’s narratives reflect her attention towards the tasks of “problem solving” and “unpicking”, so her ways of showing and telling needed to be adaptive and subject to review.

Diane: *Talking, doing and being*

A review of Diane’s transcripts highlights a shift from her relatively well configured self-talk in the original ‘Sure Start’ community, through an uncertain vacuum, towards somewhat refigured self-talk. This is reflected in a sequence of quotes from Diane, below;

“before all this integrated team started, I kindof felt me place...we had our principal [...] senior team, we all could work with each other, we all knew who was best at what to do” (Session 1)

“so at the minute we’re kinda, I feel, also feel quite awful about this cos then I feel ‘I’m going to look after the sure start team’ cos that’s my priority” (Session 1)

“we’re kinda having problems with health visitors at the moment. It’s almost like a battle as to... but I think the problem is the same with them: everybody’s kinda feeling quite vulnerable and going into their own little silos” (Session 2)

“I’m in a much better place than when we first started off and I can kinda see the journey. So things that I’ve said, like em...not really know where I fit? Yeah? Whereas now I think I do know...like there is a place for me” (Session 4)

“I think that I do a good job, and I am who I am and I’ve got where I’ve got because of me hard work, I think that’s what it is. But with that is because I talk...I talk to people, I get on with people, and that’s part of what I am and I think that’s what I have got to where I am today because I do think people recognise that I do work hard and I’m passionate about what I do.” (Session 4)

“I’m just laughing, cos I feel like...it’s starting all over again!” (Session 5)

One of the things these quotes (and Diane’s narratives generally) reflect is the transformation which occurred as Diane became subject to, and responded to, a different set of circumstances. Her summary cartoon summarises her world being ‘turned upside down’, and we discussed in sessions four and five how the creation of the new service and the OFSTED inspection provided an incentive and context for the re-evaluation of her self-talk. Diane’s narrative self is therefore presented in a dynamic relation to the cultural practices of her community of practice: it articulated her currency, and when the context and practices changed, she faced the challenge of changing her self-talk whilst remaining consistent with big stories about the relevance of her biography, and the ideas of doing, working hard and relating.

Diane recognised this relationship between talking about herself and what she did. Specifically, towards the end of our sessions, working with her self-practice talk map, Diane began to see her self-talk and practice-talk as things in a dynamic relationship²¹, and we identified a movement between the two, which we called “bouncing”. It was in the context of this conversation in session five that Diane reflected upon her need to show *and* to tell;

“So was it through telling your stories or has it been through your doing? ...but I think it’s both, isn’t it?... Cos it’s like you can’t do one without the other! ...you tell your story cos of what you’ve done but if you don’t tell your story you wouldn’t carry on doing it”

²¹ This is illustrated in the concluding section of theme 1’s findings.

“...I have to have both, I have to have to do something, but I have to talk about it to be able to carry things forward. To be able to continue to walk a path, almost and not get stuck and not stop and not feel overwhelmed.”

Within this ‘bouncing’ relationship between self-talk and practice, the idea of Diane ‘needing to change’ remained unresolved for some time. Diane told me that “a while back I went for a job and the feedback I got was being able to move from practitioner to manager”. This was a theme that Diane returned to several times, reflecting the work she needed to do to resolve her thinking on this issue and relate it the rest of her narratives. Specifically, talk about being like a leader seemed incompatible with her existing narratives;

“I don’t always know if people in leadership positions see me as professional”

“with me it’s a confidence thing – the way I am, the way I kinda show meself. I guess the way I am – ‘me’ – I do think some people in some leadership scenarios kinda are more...hierarchical?”

“[So what does the hard image get you that the friendly image does get you?]...probably it would just be acceptance from people in more of a leadership role...but if I was like that it would alienate us..”

“I don’t feel I should have to change, for people to see me as a manager cos...you should be recognised for the work that you do, I shouldn’t think that you should have to act in a certain way but I think some people in management can talk the talk but not do...not do the job, whereas I think I can do the job, but I might not say the big long words, let’s all be posh or be this or that – or wear a suit, do you know what I mean, some people think that, though, as someone being professional? ...so that’s what I was then having this struggle with”

This complex relationship between talk and practice was reflected in Diane’s practice-talk, where she was forced to consider how other senior colleagues presented themselves in the new service, and how she could best retain things that she identified as central to her self-talk: such as “being a talker”, which might not have matched the “hard image” associated with the new service.

Towards the end of our sessions, Diane’s narratives were understandably evaluative, as her participation in the study had ran alongside a major change at work. She retained pivotal elements of self-talk, including the need for a “certain type of person to work in the community”, “being a talker” and

being “passionate”. It was clear to me that these narratives had been subject to evaluation in practice and in sessions, and were retained with a renewed agency and value, having been ‘tested’. Diane’s discussion about how she demonstrated many of the qualities in her practice-talk and self-talk through the preparation for the OFSTED was an example of this – hence my drawing of OFSTED as a theatrical ‘stage’ in the practice-talk section of her table top assemblage (Appendix 9.4).

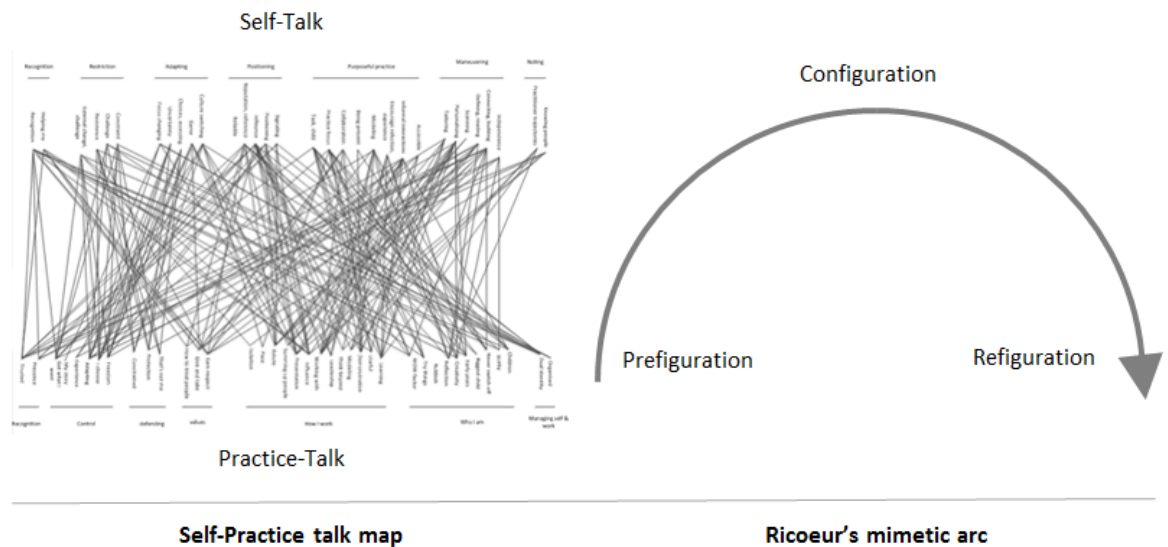
General discussion: *Talking, doing and being*

Key findings in this theme highlight various ways in which participants’ narrative identities (self-talk) emerge over time through a dynamic relationship between *showing* and *telling*, where resources are used and transformed, and those narrative elements that are sustained in on-going cycles of showing and telling being identified as key parts of participants’ narrative identities.

I developed these insights about the characteristics of the data generally as I worked on *self-practice talk* maps in particular. Initially, I generated *self-practice talk* maps to help me consider questions about the relationship between the two categories²², but once I made an improvised *connection* between the self-practice talk map and Ricoeur’s mimetic arc previously discussed (through the comparative and reflective work of the hermeneutic process), I was able to conceptualise my thinking further. I present these in Figure 27.

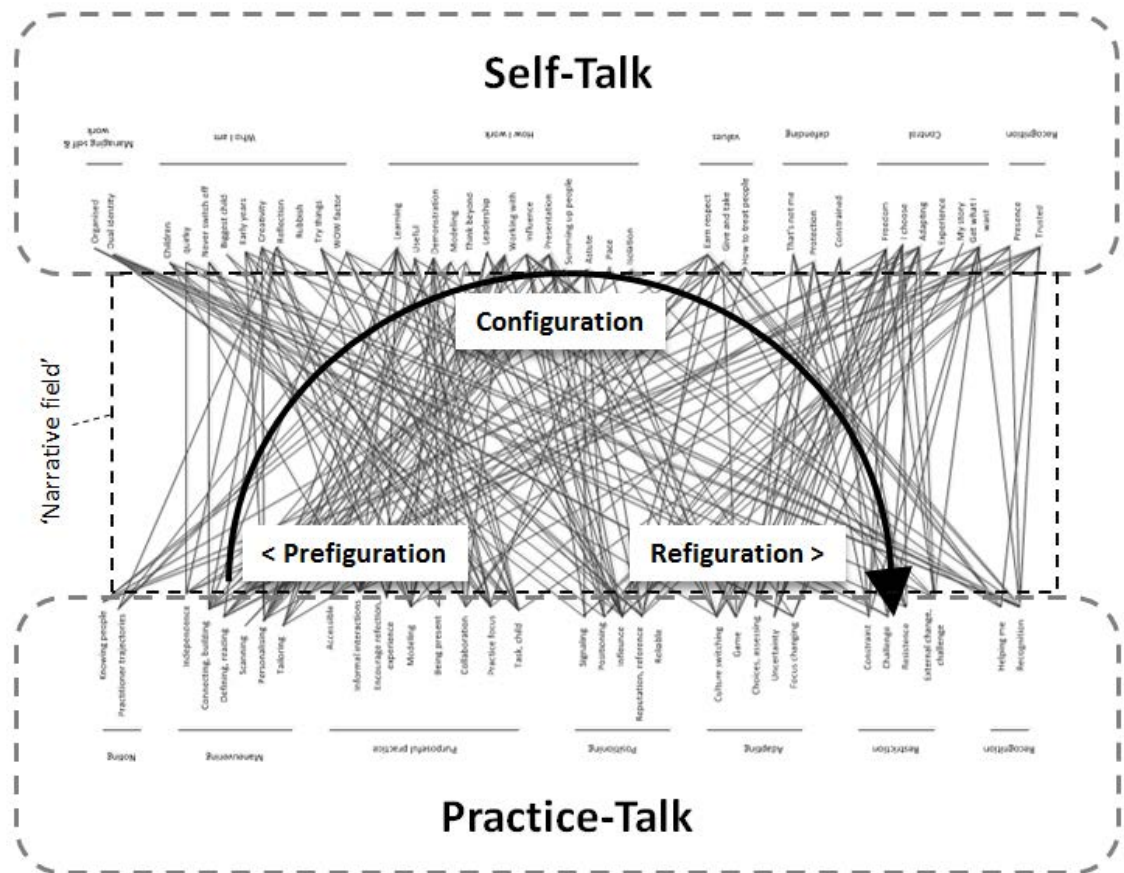
²² Self-talk and practice-talk.

Figure 27. Self-Practice talk map alongside a representation of the mimetic arc.



In viewing Self-Practice talk maps alongside a basic model of the mimetic arc, I aligned the category of *self-talk* with the *configuration* phase of the mimetic arc. In doing so, I also aligned the category of *practice-talk* with the phases of *prefiguration* and *refiguration*, as both of these mimetic phases relate to action, or practices. This is represented in Figure 28.

Figure 28. Aligning the Self-Practice talk maps with the mimetic arc.



These diagrams helped me to conceptualise what participants had been talking about in our sessions, and the characteristics of the data seen in a more abstract way, consistent with my methodology. Therefore, Figure 28 was not designed to measure narrative in a metric way, but it became useful as a *heuristic* and *hermeneutic* artefact, reflecting the theoretical and methodological chapters of this thesis. Seen in that way, I viewed the whole of the narrative data for each participant as a metaphor of a ‘narrative field’ discussed in the theoretical chapter, and multiple lines drawn between self-talk and practice-talk in Figure 28 were viewed as a more complex version of the simple mimetic arc. Further, I saw these lines as *movements* within that field, created by representing the careful analysis of relationships within narrative data. Lines may be traced from practice-talk, to self-talk and back to practice-talk. My first insight came from this presentation of the data,

which allowed me to view it in terms of *relationships*, *movements* and *transformations*. I identified that participants' *talking* and *doing* required a response from the other as a *demonstration* or *explanation* of the former, and this movement can be related to the cyclical movement of Ricoeur's mimetic spiral discussed in the theoretical chapter.

Relating showing and telling

In this study, participants' professional identity and selfhood is presented as a self project both 'shown' and 'told', where participants' narrative themes are seen to be prefigured in practices, configured into narratives and refigured as they are reapplied back into practice. In describing and identifying these phases, I emphasise the idea of transformation or movement between them - illustrated, for example, in Diane's statement that "...I have to have both, I have to have to do something, but I have to talk about it to be able to carry things forward". Doing and talking are clearly related for *all* participants, but are related in an important way which influences the development of self-talk: viewed as sequences of talk in the sessions, *and* conceptually through the mimetic spiral, I establish the significance of them *building upon one another* in the development of narrative identity.

One of the things that sequences of *doing* and *talking* achieve for participants is to provide some structure and stability through the process of *sedimentation*, where mimetic movement lays down habits and character: seen in Sharon's reputation, or Brenda's claim to experience. This is discussed by Ricoeur (1990/1994) in relation to the complementary work of *idem* (same) and *ipse* (innovative) self. For Ricoeur (1983/1990), the building work of sedimentation is part of the mimetic work of achieving coherence in the mimetic spiral (p.33). This sequence of doing and talking is seen in Diane's accounts of the OFSTED inspection in terms of her ability to show who she was;

"...a couple of weeks ago we did have an OFSTED meeting and a couple of the health visitors were there and it was absolutely brilliant it went really well, because they then could understand what we have to do as a job. I think they've just had this idea that we basically do nice

play things with children and do nothing else – they didn't understand the targets we have to work towards, they didn't understand OFSTED, they didn't understand all the hard work we have to put into the SEF and you know, all the outcomes and all the evidence" (Diane)

Sedimentation, or demonstrating on *one* occasion, is not the end of the story for Diane, or other participants. Participants illustrate processes of *sustained* mimetic activity²³ as they make progress in their professional projects. The idea of *showing* is helpful in this context as it is not the *end* of a process, it clearly is something done for an audience and is instrumental in that it has an intended effect. Diane 'shows' in order to move things on: consequently, the project is moved on, but because it is *her* that is showing and telling, her self-talk is developed at the same time. This is seen again and again in Diane's identification of herself as a 'doer' and as someone who works hard, narratives that have utility in on-going action because she has a 'track record' of consistency between her words and actions. In the longer term, participants' narratives build upon previously configured narratives and are constrained by them, as is the case for Brenda, who was conscious of the necessity of her 'long journey' of career development, in the absence of traditional qualifications.

The idea that doing and talking *build* upon one another, conceptualised as forward movement in the mimetic spiral, is my first insight drawn from data in my study. Beyond that, I draw attention to the fact that 'professional projects' and narrative identity do not develop automatically as time goes on. For all participants, projects and stories are reliant on *transformation*. Examples of transformation in self-talk are provided in Table 1.

²³ Showing and telling, repeated.

Table 1. Example transformations in talk related to cycles of mimetic activity.

| Participant | Theme | Example 1 – explicit or implied 'earlier' versions of narratives. | Example 2 – narratives which have been subject to cycles of mimetic activity. |
|-------------|--|--|--|
| Chris | Self-awareness | Lack of awareness of his impact on others (tour leading), and not being able to 'read' others: "I don't know" and "No: that's the problem.....". | Having recognised his inability to identify 'big stories' or others, Chris' self-awareness narrative now includes "have I got a story? ...I'm developing one". |
| Sharon | Role and status | Seen as " <i>practically</i> a deputy, and seen very strongly as it, as a member of the senior management team" | Following role change, reframes self-talk to focus on "oozing" influence, tactical and strategic manoeuvring: retains focus on skills, but internalises. |
| Diane | Am I a leader? | Focus on interview feedback (move from practitioner to manager), and doubts about 'do I need to change' | Evaluation of narratives leads to "I don't have to change who I am because 'proof is in the pudding'..." |
| Brenda | How do I respond to a turbulent context? | Being 'subject to' or coping with 'trials and tribulations'. | Evaluation of how Brenda has responded over time leads to re-framing narratives in terms of 'resilience'. |

Whilst participants' accounts indicate the need to be *sustained*, the examples above highlight the need for professional projects and self-talk to *adapt*. This is seen as configured self-talk is reconfigured in changing circumstances to remain relevant to practice. Once narratives have been demonstrated or 'shown' in this act of reconfiguration, they call for a fresh configuration, or explanation. This moving from 'showing' to 'telling' forces narratives through the mimetic spiral, developing self-talk over time.

Recognising, judging and using 'experience'

Having identified the importance of the relationship between showing and telling for participants, I build upon this insight by establishing practical mechanisms that enable this to occur. I do this through considering the early stages of participants' narrative life cycles by focusing on their work with 'raw materials' provided by practice experience, this being a general theme in all participants' accounts. For all participants, the movement of telling and showing relies on the *use* of experience;

“I think it’s just life...you’ve got to have so many experiences...it’s experience of experiences. Because how do you know initially, what is a good experience or a bad experience, and you’ve also got to learn how to learn from bad experiences” (Sharon)

Experience was not simply the subject of reminiscence; it indicated *familiarity with potential narrative material* that enabled participants to be able to say things such as;

“I do realise that from my experience of being a tour leader and other things I do need to attend to people, read situations and understand myself and then I can get the...it’s that payoff, isn’t it?” (Chris)

“...when I did the training, it was almost like a little light blub went on and I thought...actually, I do that, I *do* behave in that way, I do talk like that” (Brenda)

“...I suppose me journey’s been a long one because, I think I have.. ah.. maybe I hadn’t chosen the right qualification at the beginning...” (Brenda)

Experience was something worked with: consequently, participants *recognised, judged and selected* potential narrative material. For all the participants, in different ways, the ability to *recognise* was fundamentally part of what may be considered to be early configuration activity. I identify recognition as an early stage in the movement from mimesis₁ (prefiguring practices and experiences) to mimesis₂ (configuration). For example, Brenda’s quote ascribing a “solution focused” approach to herself is possible because of the recognition of similarity to practices in her past. To do this, she needs to find a basis to make that connection, to configure something that she can argue has been sustained over time. She *recognises* something that precedes the configuration of talk about it.

Recognition, as part of the mimetic process, is not always an instantaneous event according to the data. In most cases, recognition itself is developed through on-going cycles of the mimetic spiral, moving from prefigured practices, to configured self talk; being refigured again as the mimetic spiral moved forward. Building on this, I argue that the idea of recognition is related to the idea of *familiarity*, of the ability to examine and see differently, much like a jeweller might inspect a diamond from multiple angles, or as a glimpse

of a person is confirmed as they move into view, or are seen from another angle. Sharon identified recognition as a connective action, drawing on narrative resources in differing states of configuration. She stated;

“...but is it also over time that I've recognised that I 'do' recognition and noting and that...you need to be conscious of it, don't you? ...and I've realised that I actually use it to affect” (Sharon)

This idea is also illustrated well in Diane's narratives about whether she needs to change or whether she is “professional enough”. For all participants, participation in this study supported recognition of their professional stories, as Chris told me;

“...this process has helped. Cos like we were saying, you've got to crystalize your thoughts to then...erm, to verbalize them, whereas without this process I don't think it's so easy to do.” (Chris)

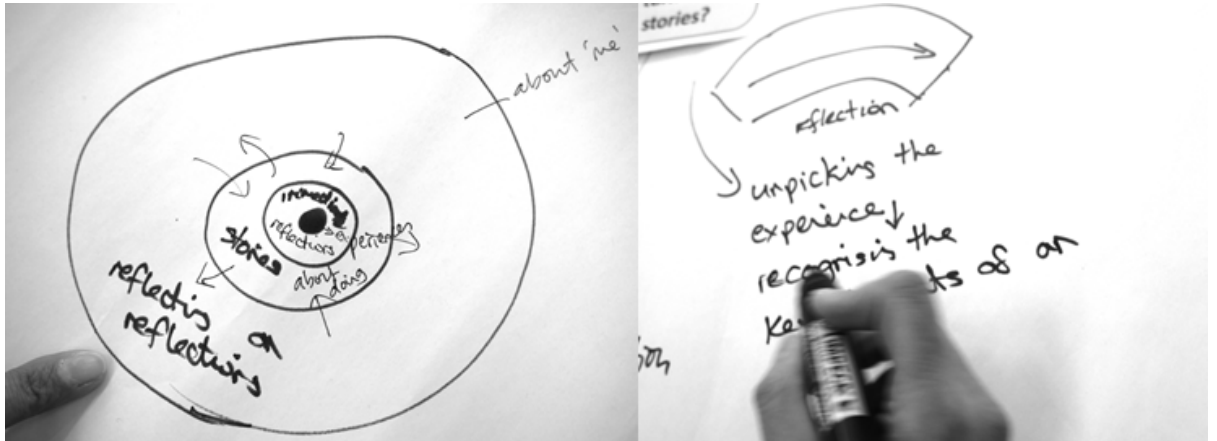
Further, following an initial configuration of a narrative, recognition of the potential of an emergent story is also gained by repeated reconfigurations, as it is used. As Chris said: “...I suppose it's just that simple fact of telling and re-telling it becomes then a story”.

Beyond familiarity and recognition, participants demonstrated the importance of *judging* and *connecting* narrative material. This was done as narratives were refigured into practice, through doing and showing, which were in turn reflected in participants' practice-talk. For Sharon, like all participants, any sort showing or telling of self was done for a reason; in her case it was often to enable the learning of others as an educator. This required judgement;

“...it's about how to identify the key elements of that experience that makes it pertinent, that makes it worth storing...there's lots and lots of experiences in teaching and in Children's Centres, I could tell you all sorts that would be not worthwhile because I haven't had....limited impact.”

Here, the act of recognising an experience is connected to her understanding and judgement of it. For Sharon, it needs to be “...pertinent, that makes it worth storing...”. Sharon talks about experience and the need to “identify the key elements” of that experience. Having recognised potential material, it is the act of *judgement* that is required in order to mobilise relevant narrative resources.

Figure 29. Sharon's annotations about reflecting and 'unpicking'



In our fourth session, working with the table top assemblage, Sharon began to represent the activity of recognising and judging experience as a series of concentric circles (Figure 29), with the centre of the circle representing the immediate situation of dialogue and wider circles representing narrative resources from experience. We spoke together as follows;

"...But there's almost like there's lots of those 'inner circles' going on to fulfil all of this...so that's like reflecting on your reflections

[...and is it in that space in which you...is the self-discovery, it's the self-reflection]

Possibly, yes...and I think that this is where the stories are.

[Yes, this is very good: make sure this is properly annotated!]

...but these are your immediate reflections – there's your immediate reflections

[around the event]

...so that's your immediate reflection...and I think that 'this' is probably your stories, and your reflections on the stories

[So when you say stories, you're meaning the stuff we tell in order to do things?]

The stuff we tell, yeah.

[But that 'leaks' into the broader, the broader set of stories which draw on]

...we need an inner circle, go on then. Yeah, that's it. But it is that reflections on reflection. Reflection on reflections and I think it is going quite deep into...it's like the universe and beyond, isn't it? To infinity and beyond! But it is, it's that... and you know that's quite immediate and your stories maybe, and this can be years and decades – this reflection on reflections, is can be...it literally can be something that happened years and years and years ago suddenly 'clicks'

[It's almost like they are in a very slow orbit...]

Slow orbit!!”

For all of the participants, in different ways, the mechanism of reflection is seen to be crucial to recognising and assessing potential narrative resources. For Sharon, ‘stories’ are regularly used narratives relating to situations of practice; they address and relate to the characteristics of those situations. Stories are configured in this context, but this configuration draws upon²⁴ the experiences in slow orbit around them, as per the dialogue above.

For all participants, *reflecting* and *judging* build on recognition are practical activities, where Sharon’s term “data” refers to potential narrative material. Interestingly, Sharon interprets the concept according to her own professional practice of observation, assessment and planning as a teacher:

“...it’s the application of data: now, the only thing that’s missing is my analysis of that data, because yes, I’ve noted things, and yes, I’ve applied that knowledge, but somewhere, in the middle there will be my assessment. It’s like observation, assessment and planning.” (Sharon)

I have given examples from my study that show that recognising and judging, as early stages of configuration, precede the use of narrative resources. Ricoeur (2005, p.25) also notes that the practice of *judgement* is significant, as he links it to the operation of recognition and identification. Because of their use in practice, narratives are judged according to how useful they are in terms of children and families. This is something echoed by Brenda, when I asked her what ‘got used’:

“Because they’re significant, though, haven’t they? They have to be a significant thing to turn up as a story and they have got to have some kind of structure, really. It’s got to be meaningful, a meaningful

²⁴ To use Brenda’s phrase.

experience to you to turn up as a story.....and to turn up as a story, there has to be a relevant time to tell it.” (Brenda)

Additionally, Sharon made a further comment about relevance when I asked about her selection of narratives in a situation;

“...they wouldn’t come to mind that quick. Because it’s only the effective stories that stick.”

Consequently, an ‘effective’ story is one that can be used in a current situation, but is also something that person *can* say: it must also be consistent with their history and character, so that it may be validated and received by others. These stories can be an instructional resource and can ‘speak of’ a number of valuable lessons. Stories remain effective where they continue to be useful – and so are sustained over several mimetic cycles.

Brenda elaborates this point when she says;

“...So lots of stories from there and the (estate name) again. I think because they were so...some of the experiences were so bizarre they stayed with us a little bit longer than...normal stories!”

Refiguration practices

So far, I have identified the ways in which experience potentially provides a large set of narrative resources in various states of configuration. These resources do not exist independently of participants, and I have shown ways in which they rely upon participants’ abilities to recognise and judge them. Such activities represent the early stages of participants’ configuration work. Once configured, participants’ narratives return to be refigured in situations of practical experience.

In addition to examples of ‘early’ work done in the narrative cycle, most of our sessions were taken up with talk about how stories were deployed. In this context, participants indicated issues that must be considered as narratives were refigured, even things as simple as the need to change who a story is ‘about’;

“I think you can have poetic licence because you can...sometimes you have to almost in a way because if you didn't it would identify the individuals who are in the individual setting...so for an anonymising, you might tweak” (Sharon)

Through examples such as this, participants displayed awareness of the need to *select* and *present* stories so they are relevant to a given situation;

“The key thing with your stories is choosing the right bit of which story to tell to whoever you're talking to. It's not telling the same story to everybody. It's telling the story appropriately.” (Sharon)

Participants all discussed the act of improvisation, as stories were deployed with others. Practical experience, as the site of improvisation, required them to identify and relate configured narratives so that they could be successfully refigured through editing, emphasis and so on, as Chris said;

“I can be more open with my peers, we've talked about in a previous session about, you're putting on a display in some ways for your team because you're constantly trying to get the message across because you want them to get the things that you want, but with my peers, and certainly in previous, you could be more open with 'I'm really struggling with this'...”

Whilst these practical considerations may be considered mundane or insignificant, I argue that they are precisely the sorts of ‘micro activities’ that shape the on-going development of self-talk for participants. Just as early configuration activity focused on expanding meaning of events through recognising, judging and connecting, once narrative material (more or less implying the self) was developed, this sort of refiguration work had an equally transformational effect. Here, all participants demonstrated practical refiguration work that involved *selecting* material, *emphasising* relevance and *associating* with others.

Just as material had been subject to enplotment and connection to other elements in the process of configuration, the process of selecting, emphasising and associating that material refined it further, selecting, over time, those useful narratives that would be taken forward in the mimetic spiral.

However, just as configuration was a field of limited possibilities, narratives could not be *refigured* in *any* way; consequently, participants' self projects

(1990/1994, p.158) improvised and evolved within limits. Adapting *within* these limits of relevance and plausibility involved perception and skill as participants' considered others. In this example, Chris talked about the need to maintain consistency in his talk:

"I think because if I only said it in one context it would undermine the story. Like we were just saying before, if you're doing it in one area, one sphere...one community, sorry, and in one community acting in a completely different way word would then leak out which would then into one of your other communities."

Refiguration activity was adapted within limits applying both to the situations of refiguration (relevance) and backwards into the wider body of previously configured narratives (for consistency and validity). Here, Chris notes the need for his own adaptation to 'work' both in the situation and in relation to his existing self-talk, something he talks about as his 'values';

"...as a leader you're quite often doing a performance, acting... but it can't be made up, it's got to be grounded in your values cos otherwise it doesn't ring true, it wouldn't resonate with the person receiving the performance."

Towards a meaningful self

I previously represented participants' self-talk as part of a mimetic spiral, where professional projects were both sustained and transformed as participants were involved in showing and telling the self. Building upon that, I have discussed ways in which individuals recognise, identify and judge potential narrative resources. For all participants, whilst experience and personal biography clearly relied on the past, identity work was done in the context of goals, and involved an orientation to the future.

Chris's own narrative was heavily influenced by his experience of climbing and trek leading and the ways he had previously needed to be clear about goals. The idea of a goal or purpose – for Chris and others – provided a focus for configuration activity.

"I think it's having that long term goal, vision, whatever you want to call it, really. ...that I talked about, in a previous session I think, where

you've got that distant, distant goal and you may get knocked around on the path to getting to there but you still have the same overall direction"

The idea of a goal in all of the narratives provided a point which narratives could be configured towards. In other words, stories addressed a future goal or anticipated situation, they considered (for example) who needed influencing, what future threats needed to be guarded against, what their work need to achieve and so on. Many narratives, seen as part of a professional project, were configured in such a way that they connected to past events, providing historical continuity but also were configured in relation to an anticipated future. For Chris, talk about values achieved both of these things, and sat in the overlap between Ricoeur's *idem*²⁵ and *ipse*²⁶ self:

"Yeah, I think they're the core beliefs or values, really, and you do improvise around them – so it's having that end point and having those core values and that gives you a really strong thread to which to weave everything else around... So, yes, I am building a story..."

Viewing the formation of narrative identity in time emphasises the importance of selecting narrative elements for a purpose. In Sharon's narrative, the focus on children's learning is a central theme, and narratives about practices and 'self' relate to this in many ways. Sharon had a well developed set of narratives which explained why she did what she did: this applied to what was going on as she 'put together' narratives for use in practice. One particular conversation illustrated this well, where Sharon reflected that what she was doing was to:

"...Isolate the elements of an experience to ..identify those that have impact on the quality"

Chris also spoke about being selective, but in a different way. His discussion of his leadership practices used a climbing metaphor about packing equipment that he applied both to his practices and self-narratives. For Chris, selection was also about what was needed to achieve things.

²⁵ Same, identifiable.

²⁶ Creative, innovative.

“I think certainly the (place name) team people made comments, and also when I left the coalfield team, people said ‘I got things done’ and you knew, I always made it clear where we were going, and I think that’s that drive all that... you have a focus and everything else either supports you getting to that focus or doesn’t – and if it doesn’t then you discard it... and I suppose you get in the habit of looking at something and going ‘is it really going to help me or is it going to hold me back?’. Yeah, when you’re packing a sack which you’ve got to take stuff to keep you warm, stuff to keep you dry, stuff to keep you fed, stuff to keep you safe...and you’ve got to carry it all – so there’s the trade-offs, there’s all these things you’ve got to achieve and I’ve only got a certain ability to carry a certain weight...”

How Chris talks about what he does and who he is clearly mimetic activity: narratives about selecting, being fit for purpose and so on are prefigured in climbing experience. Configured narratives explicitly make the connection between practices and representations in the use of metaphor. Narratives about being fit for purpose are the used in practice. This particular narrative is well developed, but is applied now in new ways in ‘Early Years’ contexts. It is talk about practice, but it is closely associated with him – the person who climbed and speaks of what he has learnt.

In Sharon’s narratives, being an educator influenced the ways in which her representative narratives were configured. Narratives of her practices reflect an awareness of intention towards others in the process of teaching or educating. She talked about the reflection this required on her part in term of what she needed to be and to do to support others’ learning. Her talk about ‘isolating the elements of an experience’ addressed the issue of selecting narrative elements. The activity of ‘selecting’ is itself illuminating. In order to select resources, participants must first be aware of them and also need to identify or classify them. Selecting narrative material is done with an understanding of the status, characteristics or illustrative potential of that material.

“This is the experience in the middle, right, that’s the actual event. You’ve got that perhaps ‘in the moment’ and then you’ve got the stepping back and then you’ve got an even bigger circle that steps back even further because that is perhaps of more experiences that go into this.”

“It is that unpicking.... It’s unpicking the experience.”

Towards meaningful self-talk?

When seen in terms of on-going, maturing mimetic activity, the importance of *consistency* over time is underlined. Ricoeur notes that time and narrative are intimately connected in ideas and activities as diverse as retelling, explaining, anticipating and imagining. He notes that one aspect of configuration is enplotment, or sequential ordering of events. Telling their stories enabled (or prompted) participants to explain things established or changed that they seemed to want to apply to themselves.

“...we were going through a massive change in the whole restructure and it started me to think...differently. I have changed, definitely...in just I think finding out who I am.” (Diane)

For Chris, the new situation prompted the need to reconfigure his own practices in the light of the practices of others:

“I remember one of the first management meetings where all of us a managers, co-ordinators were meeting with (manager) and (peer) saying well, according to Covey’s book, the seven habits – and I’m thinking ‘bloody hell, she’s reading that book in her own time!’ you know, I’d never read it, I’d heard about it cos it’s a famous book and ‘crikey I’m going to have to up me game here’ and these highly competent women who know the business inside out and I’m just basically a climbing instructor!”

In many ways, the need for constant refigurations of narratives of practices and of self is a feature of all of the narratives in this study. Some stand out as milestones such as a service reorganisation, or joining a new professional community, but participants’ reflective narratives show how they constantly interpret situations of dialogue and reconfigure their stories. Generally, all participants’ narratives rely on change as something that calls for an explanation or response.

Taking part in this study was a novel experience for all the participants who did not ‘normally’ talk about their practices or selves in such an explicit or detailed way. Change over time both called for an explanation and also offered participants an opportunity to configure the narrative self, anchoring the self, narrated in the present, with something that is seen to persist in

time. In many narratives, it is the things that *persist* that seem to become associated with the narrative of self. In this case, the self was the thing that was sustained in spite of challenges.

For all participants, the act of configuration (or refiguration) of a narrative 'about' them has an evaluative element, and representative narratives seem to require an ontological or ethical evaluation. I previously noted that narrative resources can be configured in a re-reading of history or by a changed anticipation of the future, but they are not simply neutral 'evidence' or raw materials. Using ordinary language, one may talk about what a story 'means', and in the case of these participants it is possible to see ways in which mature narratives²⁷ address evaluative, ontological and ethical concerns.

“because I’m still struggling with what the story means...I suppose there’s a common thread of that need to em, you know, make a difference, which comes through...So, I suppose my story is that I do have sort of an inner drive I suppose to try and make a difference, I know I’m considered as very optimistic and positive.” (Chris)

Towards the end of our sessions, Diane’s narratives become more obviously evaluative: her question about being “good enough” asks the question ‘why?’ in relation to moving forward, or not, and not being recognised. Her concern is in part about what this says about *her*. The idea of evaluation involves participants actively moving between practice-talk and self-talk. Like other examples, Diane demonstrates movement between self prefigured in practices and represented in self-talk. She configures an tentative narrative which questions why she has not ‘moved on’, but it is only by cycling through further sequences of talk about practices and configuring evaluations that she arrives at a relatively stable self-talk.

Even within his last session with me, Chris went through a similar process – struggling to configure a narrative, then moving through several ‘cycles’ of talk about practices and self before returning to his original task, albeit with a different evaluation. In the first quote, he is in the middle of moving cartoon images around and discussing relationships and sequences. The following

²⁷ These being reflections upon narratives, having gone through several mimetic cycles.

two quotes are then 'snapshots' in time as he returns to an overall configuration of his story:

"Yes, so...um, as individual frames, as stand alones, they're all correct, but to tell a coherent story I'm not sure, personally whether they all link together in such a nice, neat strip as you've got it."

"...Cos I'm in it all the time, you can't see the wood for the trees, can you? So...the fact that there is distinct groupings and they fall into three – like with the configuration and so on...I'm still amazed at, because for me, living it, it just seems a swirling fog of a mess and every now and then I pop out of the fog!"

"I think it's correct...now. Now I've had time to think about it and de-stress from my point of view and concentrate on this. As I say, I do feel those three panels...are correct, and what I was saying was struggling in my own mind with the second one, the light bulb; but in actual fact, just from our discussion just now I have made a lot of those connections – whether they always fit in that nice neat continuum..."

Chris's narrative(s) about himself therefore take time to configure, as he moves through these cycles of mimetic activity. In everyday language, participants 'come to terms' with the range of narrative materials they have, their situations of dialogue and how to configure evaluative narratives – things I tended to call the 'bigger stories' as we talked together. One of the roles of mimetic activity for these participants seems to be about allowing this evaluation to 'fit' the narrative materials and situations of dialogue available to them.

In summary, following a presentation of example findings from each participant, I have discussed ways in which participants' self-talk – their narrative identity – emerges over time, through movement between showing and telling. I have emphasised the ways in which activity at different stages of the mimetic cycle is initiated, sustained or transformed. Specifically, my reflections together with participants have led to a discussion of themes of 'recognising, judging and using experience' and 'mobilising and manipulating narrative resources'. Finally, I have shown how mimetic activity over time is central to the configuration of framing or evaluative narratives. Within these themes, I have begun to illustrate the variety and sophistication of participants' configuration and reconfiguration work over time.

Theme 2: Coherence and structure in narrative identity

Whereas the first theme of findings and discussion focused on mimetic *movement*, and the adaptation of the narrative self through repeated cycles of configuration and refiguration, this theme considers in more detail the significance of *connections* between narrative elements. In addition to drawing upon my detailed hermeneutic readings of and memo making about narrative data, my insights in this theme specifically draw upon self talk and self-practice talk maps, and table top assemblages, which literally represent the *connectedness* of narratives for participants. I begin with some illustration of the significance of connectedness for individual participants.

Chris: Coherence and structure in narrative identity

Like all participants' maps, Chris's self-talk map identified a unique pattern of connection between narrative themes. These are displayed below in Figure 30. In the map, narrative themes that were relatively more connected to others, were those of 'climbing and tour leading' (as in *being* a climber), 'ethics and values', 'making a difference' and 'public service' with the theme of 'perspective changing' growing in connectedness.

Figure 30. Chris's self-talk map.

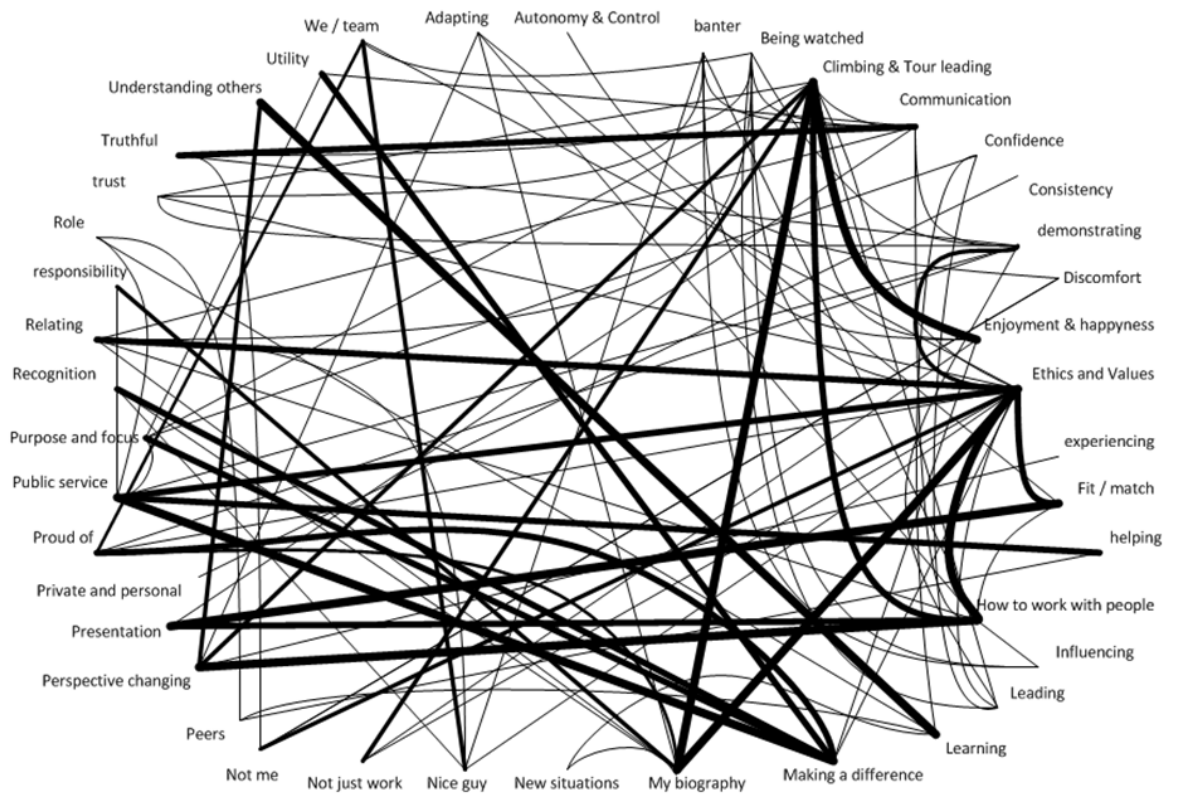
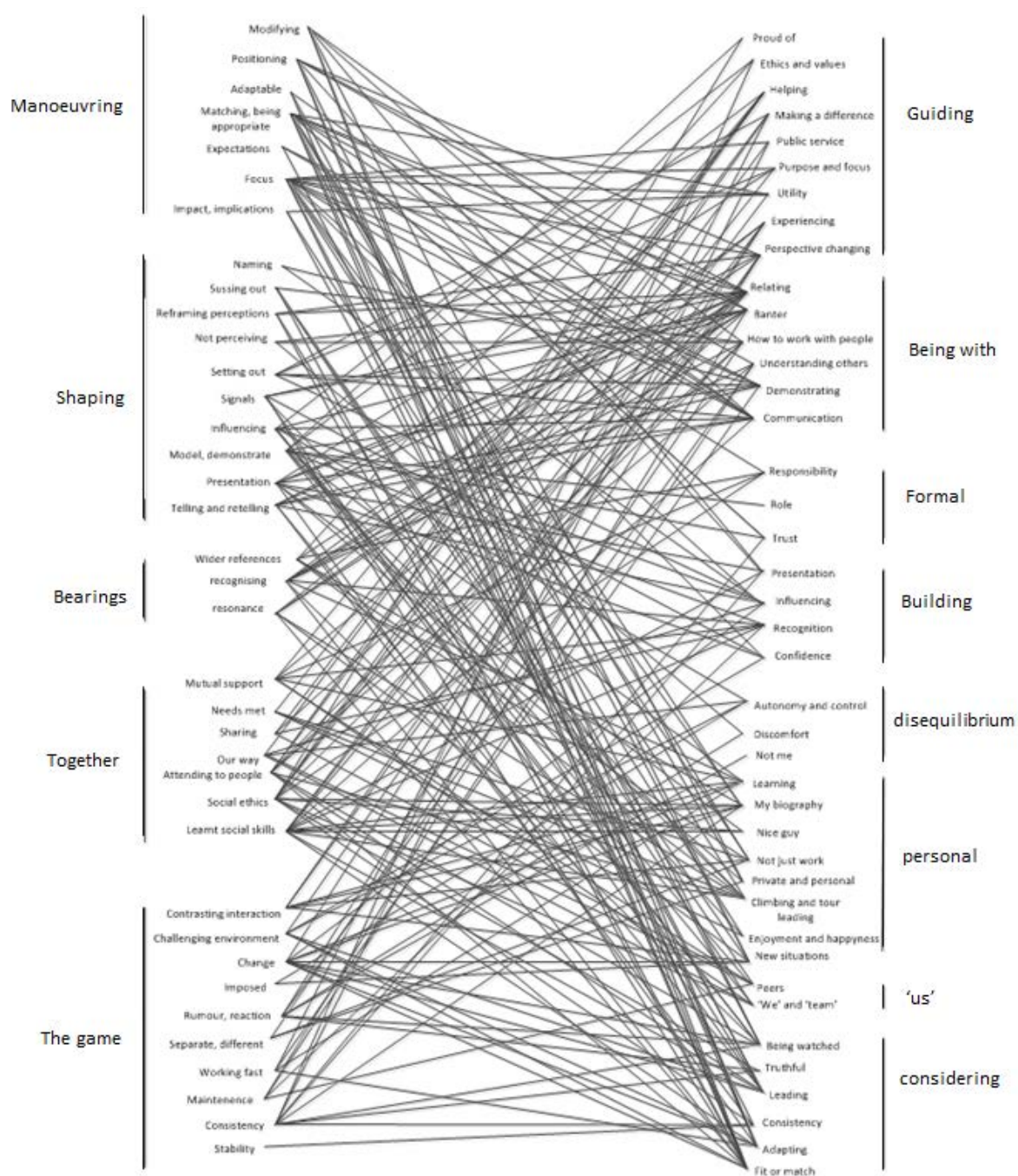


Figure 31. Chris's self-practice talk map.



In his self-practice talk map, there were strong connections between higher level codes of 'manoeuvring'²⁸ and 'considering'²⁹, with weaker, but still significant, connections between 'the game'³⁰ and 'being with'³¹. The theme

²⁸ Mindful movement considering others.

²⁹ Being ethically aware and considerate.

³⁰ Interactions with and work around others who are acting strategically.

of 'bearings'³² also connected with the theme of 'being with'. Generally, these 'bands' of connections in Figure 31 point to the *functions* that these narratives perform, where self-talk often explains what *sort* of person they are to be doing these things. Self-talk is a necessary response to practice in all cases. Practice themes are never simply describing activity with others, they reflect a complex and ethically challenging professional 'world' and therefore rely on being informed by and connected to a sort of *considered personhood* that enables them to act in these ways.

For Chris, *lack of connection* is evident to me throughout his narratives – his struggling to make sense of others and to understand situations. Relating his biographical experiences on themes such as responsibility and being purposeful to his current self and practices was a revelation for Chris, as evidenced in his reflective work in sessions four and five. He struggled to configure a coherent self-narrative because of a lack of connections, demonstrating their importance within and between stories, to the narrative self. Interestingly, Chris seizes on others' feedback to him which he finds surprising and insightful, and uses their direct quotes to talk about himself, perhaps in place of his relatively unconnected³³ self-narratives. Where he *has* narratives that are relatively more connected and configured, these tend to come from walking and climbing, where careful attention to those practices have provided Chris with a set of anecdotes and approaches that he can use with staff – seen in his practice talk about being focused, for example.

In addition to his walking and climbing narratives, where there are connections in Chris's talk, they seem to be framed in the big stories such as "making a difference". His self-talk seemed to me to emphasise what I called "practical ethics" – themes such as behaving in ethical ways, being aware of being watched and treating people equally. So, in addition to metaphors and associations borrowed from climbing, he presents an ethical self intimately related to the task of leading public services. More than other participants,

³¹ Being attentive to others.

³² Relating to context or experience.

³³ Unconfigured.

Chris indicated that he separated personal and work talk³⁴ – the consequence of this choice seems to be that by *not* connecting more intimate aspects of self-talk to professional practice, he limited their configuration. Through the NPQICL and sessions with me, however, Chris was *beginning* to build upon the self-talk about ethical practice by personalising his story.

Sharon: Coherence and structure in narrative identity

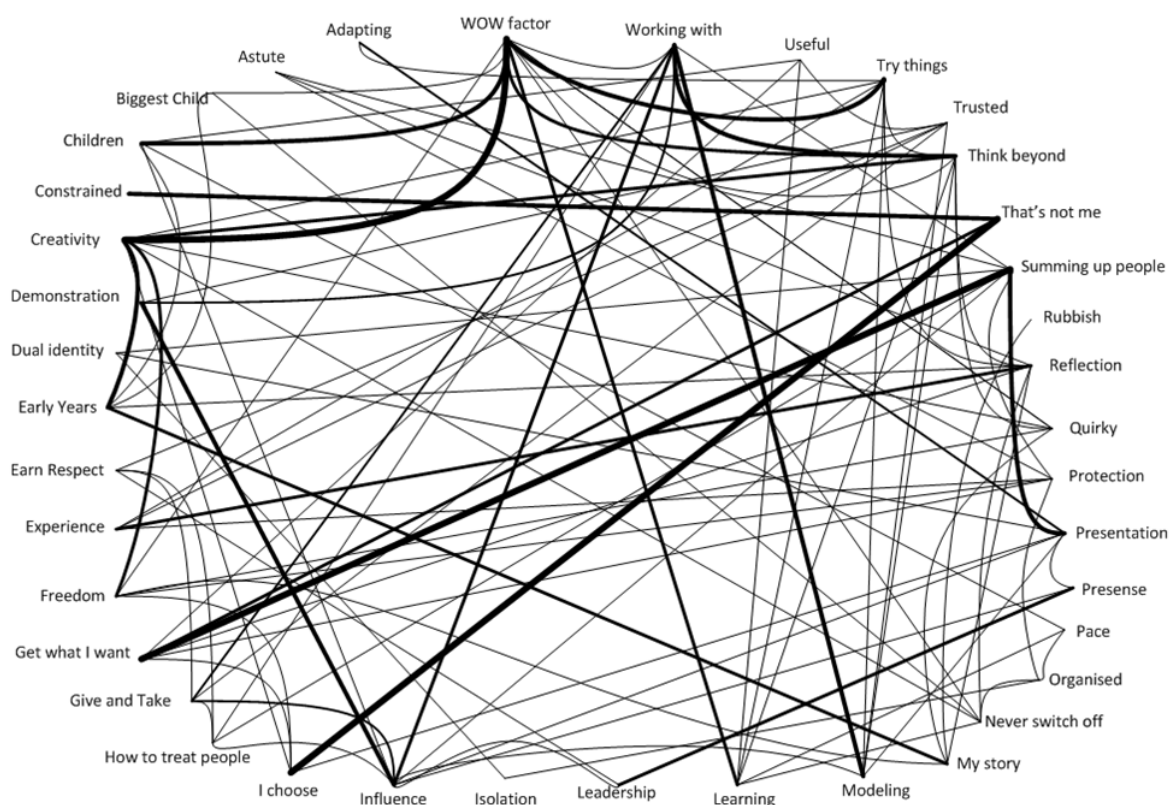
Sharon's self-talk map emphasises the connectedness of her narrative themes about being someone who was creative³⁵, who valued the "wow factor", and was someone who "worked with" others. In addition, her talk about herself also emphasised some important signals about her intentions and preferences, with "get what I want", "influence" "reflection" and "summing up people" also being strongly connected to other things she claimed about or ascribed to herself. My impression in reviewing our conversations is that these two sets of connections were mutually reinforcing – being able to be that sort of creative and collaborative person was facilitated by careful signalling of Sharon's agency and independence. One of Sharon's own responses to tracing connections on her self-talk map was;

“...it's like a net, like a web. A web of support”

³⁴ He told me that a small overlap was needed.

³⁵ Seen in that node and in the "think beyond" node.

Figure 32. Sharon's self-talk map.



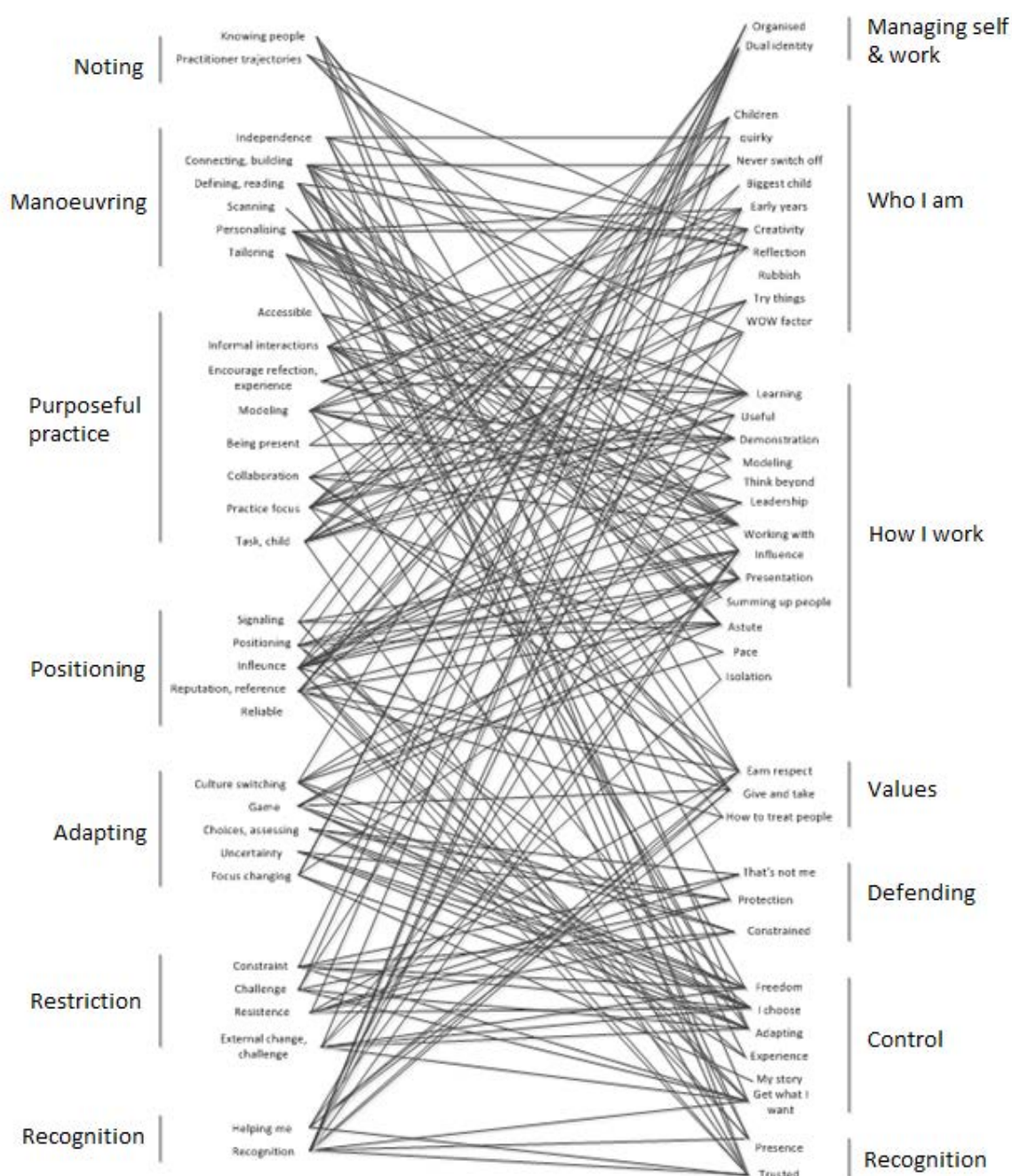
In her self-practice talk map, talk about 'doing' and 'myself' display multiple connections, perhaps resulting from Sharon's stated commitment to reflection present before our conversations. Specifically, there are multiple connections between the higher level codes of "manoeuvring" and "positioning" and "how I work". In this case, practice-talk of "manoeuvring"³⁶ and "positioning"³⁷ connect to Sharon's discussion of "how I work", where she describes herself as someone who perceives and influences people, being someone who carefully considers. The connections are significant: Sharon's actions *justify* her claims and *inform* her ability to be the person she claims to be. Elsewhere, both "manoeuvring" and "adapting" justify and

³⁶ Showing an awareness of context and personalisation.

³⁷ Communicating that awareness.

inform Sharon's description of herself as someone who is choosing and getting what she wants in the higher level self-talk code of "control"³⁸.

Figure 33. Sharon's self-practice talk map.



³⁸ Higher level codes are the groupings of codes at the side of Sharon's self-practice talk map, Figure 33.

Beyond individual sets of connections, the 'big story' of being a learner or an educator is an organising feature of Sharon's narratives, connecting and explaining many different aspects of what she does. In terms of *claims about the self*, Sharon's relatively well developed self-narrative demonstrates the importance of an organising theme, which is constructed from and maintained by the smaller connections within it. However, our talk about *practices* also highlighted the usefulness of connections in the *performance* of narratives. In discussing interactions with other professionals, especially with head teachers, Sharon explained to me the non-verbal cues and verbal signals she used to differentiate herself from any given educator who was offering, on paper the same service. What she jokingly described as "flirting" struck me as an important way of connecting the unique creative characteristics of her professional self with the educational offer she made to advise and improve. For Sharon, this particular connection is significant, as being herself was prized and defended, so her practices needed to reflect her self-talk. Elsewhere within her practice-talk, Sharon demonstrates the value for her of connected narratives with practitioners. She talks about remembering, returning to and carrying on conversations, highlighting the need for practice-talk to be *temporally* connected.

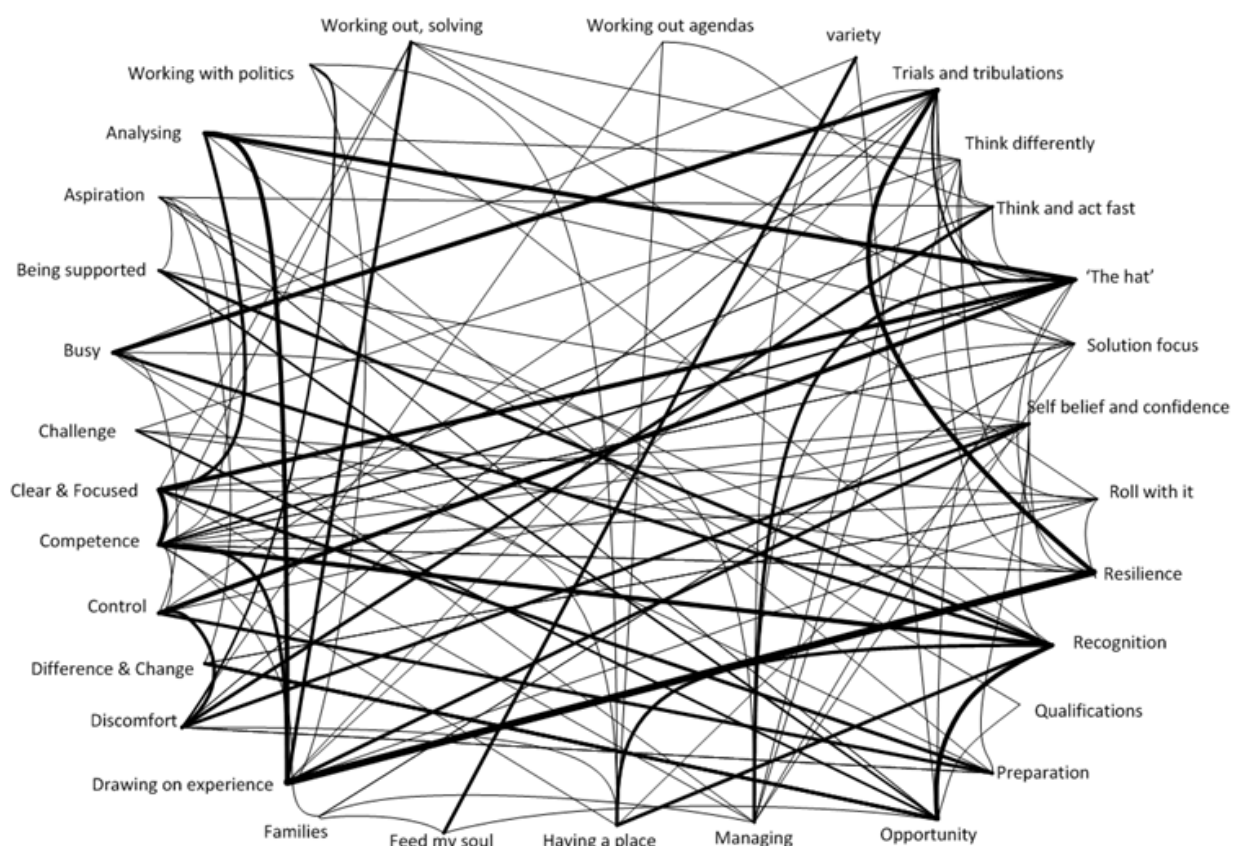
So far, I have suggested that Sharon's narratives show connectedness in terms of *claims*, and in terms of making connections *in talk with others*. A third category of connections can also be identified: *reflexive* connections that anticipate and revise. Within our sessions, Sharon demonstrated the value of connecting self-talk that rehearses or revises attitudes to change. We talked about what she would want in the forthcoming redundancy and re-organisation, and she playfully considered a mainstream educational leadership role. Once her role changed³⁹, Sharon chose instead to focus on her ability to choose by emphasising the part-time nature of her new role and her ability to personalise it, returning to themes of choice, freedom and control. Connecting activity is important here as it maintains the integrity of her self-talk, emphasising her agency within seemingly contradictory practices of being an 'official' advisor in a more formal service.

³⁹ Sharon having ended up doing the very thing she did not want to do.

Brenda: Coherence and structure in narrative identity

Brenda's self-talk map reflects her experience of – as she describes – “trials and tribulations”, or the fast paced and unpredictable nature of her practice. The code of “trials and tribulations” is therefore dominant, as is talk about being competent and focused. Her ability to draw on experience and to deal with situations in a cool, clear and logical way (e.g. “the hat”) is also important to her talk about herself. In her self-talk, claims about the self are also questions, so Brenda wonders *if* people see her as professional, and she is concerned to be seen as competent. Connecting work in her self-talk therefore represents this *activity of questioning and reflecting*, so her self-talk is at times tentative and questioning. Conversely, being experienced and embracing opportunity form an organising structure for her claims about herself, being rooted (and therefore justified) so strongly in her professional biography.

Figure 34. Brenda's self-talk map.



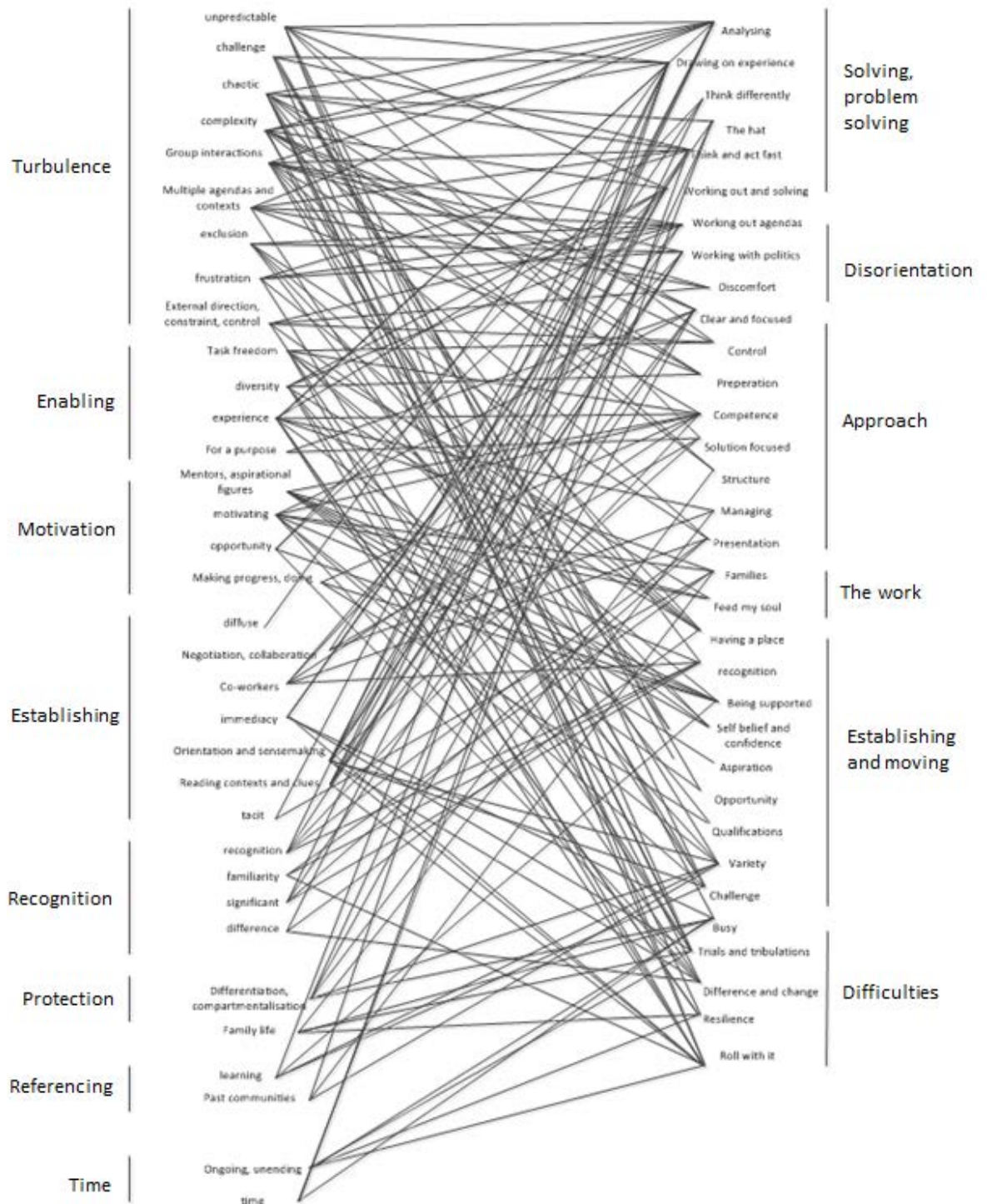
In connections between her self-talk and practice-talk, I can identify a set of connections within the higher level codes of “turbulence” and being someone who values support and opportunity, but also lives with change⁴⁰. Brenda’s self-talk is therefore a sense-making response to disorientation in her professional world, reflecting her stated focus on solutions. Further, her self-talk is less of a claim to ‘be’, or to have ‘arrived’, but hinges on her ability to work with disorientation and uncertainty. Elsewhere, a number of practice-talk categories⁴¹ connect to Brenda’s talk about being a problem solver. Looking at the detail of these narratives suggests that Brenda’s ability to identify the significance of things and her skilled organisation of her personal and professional world support, and are supported by her claims to be someone who draws on experience, think differently and be decisive. As with

⁴⁰ Seen in the codes “Establishing and moving” and “Difficulties”, Figure 34.

⁴¹ For example, “Recognition”, “Protection”, “Referencing”, in Figure 35.

all participants, the connections *across* self and practice talk reflect where there is a showing and telling of the same thing.

Figure 35. Brenda's self-practice talk map.



As with Chris, there is a significance in Brenda's lack of, or instable, connections. Brenda's self-talk includes reference to being focused, clear and competent, and these claims compete with a threat of 'the other' – for example; chaos, lack of clarity, thinking slowly in meetings. Representing connections between codes with the same type of line is therefore limiting, as they do not describe the *quality* of the connection, or the instability of Brenda's self-talk. Reviewing the transcripts of our conversations suggests that on occasions Brenda's self-talk is simply the opposite of the practice talk, arguably is not a response to it and is consequently weaker for it. An alternate reading is that Brenda uses organising narratives⁴² to *contain* potentially chaotic ones, and displays mastery over them. Both are equally possible readings.

As with Sharon's narratives, the use of biography, and therefore plot, identifies temporal connections in Brenda story: events are linked and refigured or aligned to support the task of explanation. Brenda's example of a 'lightbulb' moment when attending solution focused training is an example of this, where she realised "I *do* think like that!". As with Chris, there are elements of Brenda's professional biography that retain active connections to contemporary self-talk because they support and inform it. Like all biographies, there are gaps, wrong turns and dead ends, but Brenda's narratives indicate a useful connecting (and 'fast forwarding') device, when she talks about "waiting for opportunities". In the lack of a seamless biographical narrative, the idea of purposeful "waiting" is a form of connection, where it helps Brenda explain and justify, and gives ownership to Brenda as the teller of her story.

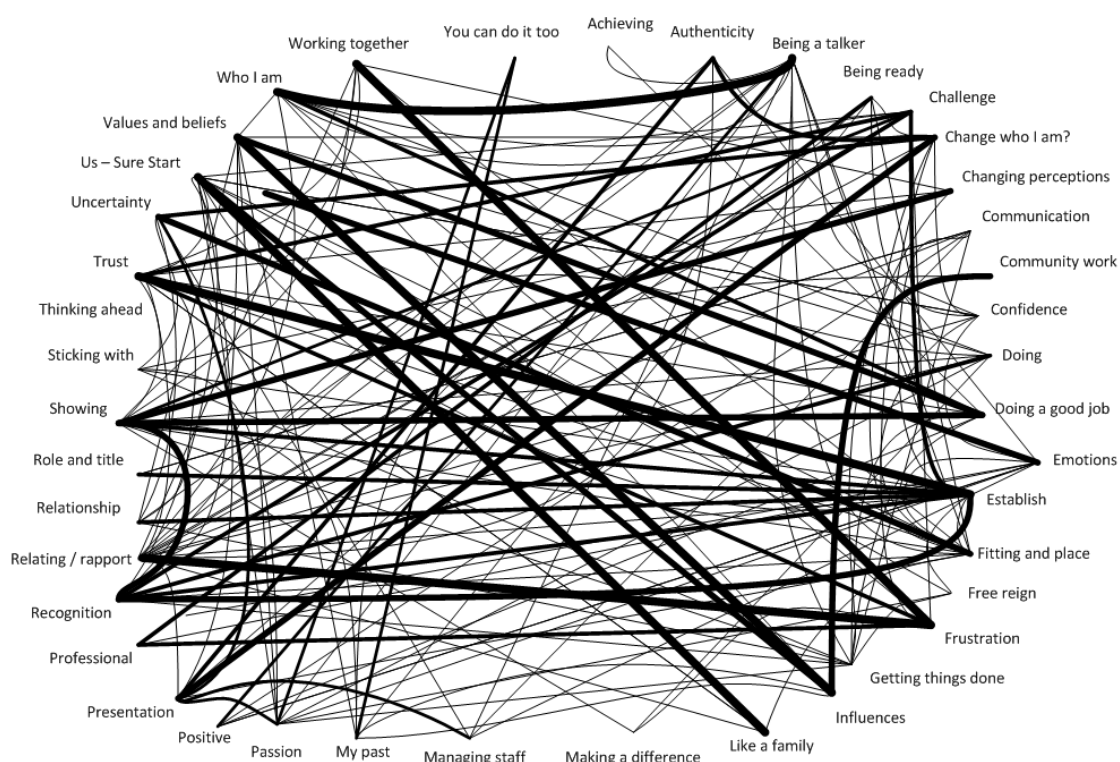
Diane: Coherence and structure in narrative identity

Diane's self-talk map is characterised by lots of connections: perhaps fitting for someone who described herself as a "talker". Therefore, identifying key nodes of connection was not a 'clear cut' process, but Diane's reference to

⁴² Such as references to "Structure" and "The Hat".

herself as someone who established and showed herself, and fought for recognition are clear. This is perhaps unsurprising in the context of her story. Equally well connected are her references to herself as someone who can relate and build rapport – being a talker and a ‘doer’. Interestingly, Diane’s talk about herself is *a/so* talk about her Sure Start colleagues, as they are all cast adrift in the new integrated service. In this respect, her member of a group is significant for her professional identity, and she identifies her own professional characteristics with those of the Sure Start community. Overall, her connections emphasise consistency and strength of her claim – so she is a person who shows, demonstrates, values and builds trust and her self-presentation is focused on being competent and relevant in relation to the new service. Many of Diane’s self-talk themes are similar to her practice-talk themes, reflecting, as a community worker, the importance of doing with others as the basis for her professional self.

Figure 36. Diane’s self-talk map.



The self-practice talk map is itself a metaphor for Diane's questioning of her professional self, as she constantly relates her new practice context with her stories about herself: as she indicated, the lines represent a set of dynamic connections, or "bouncing", between who she is and what is going on. A number of 'bands' of connections are concentrated together, the first being between the higher level codes of "Doing"⁴³ and the activity of "defending"⁴⁴, reflecting the relevance of *who she is* to the challenge she faces: the number of connections underlining the number of ways in which she made her case in our sessions.

In a similar way, the connections between "Connecting work"⁴⁵ are mirrored in reflective self-talk about "turmoil"⁴⁶ as she reflects on the difficulties of *disconnection* in the new service. Finally, practice-talk codes about "Reworking"⁴⁷ are connected with self-talk about "facing others"⁴⁸ – there is clearly a sense-making movement between the two, as Diane seeks to align them.

⁴³ Being a 'doer', and someone who achieves and encourages.

⁴⁴ Justifying and showing credibility.

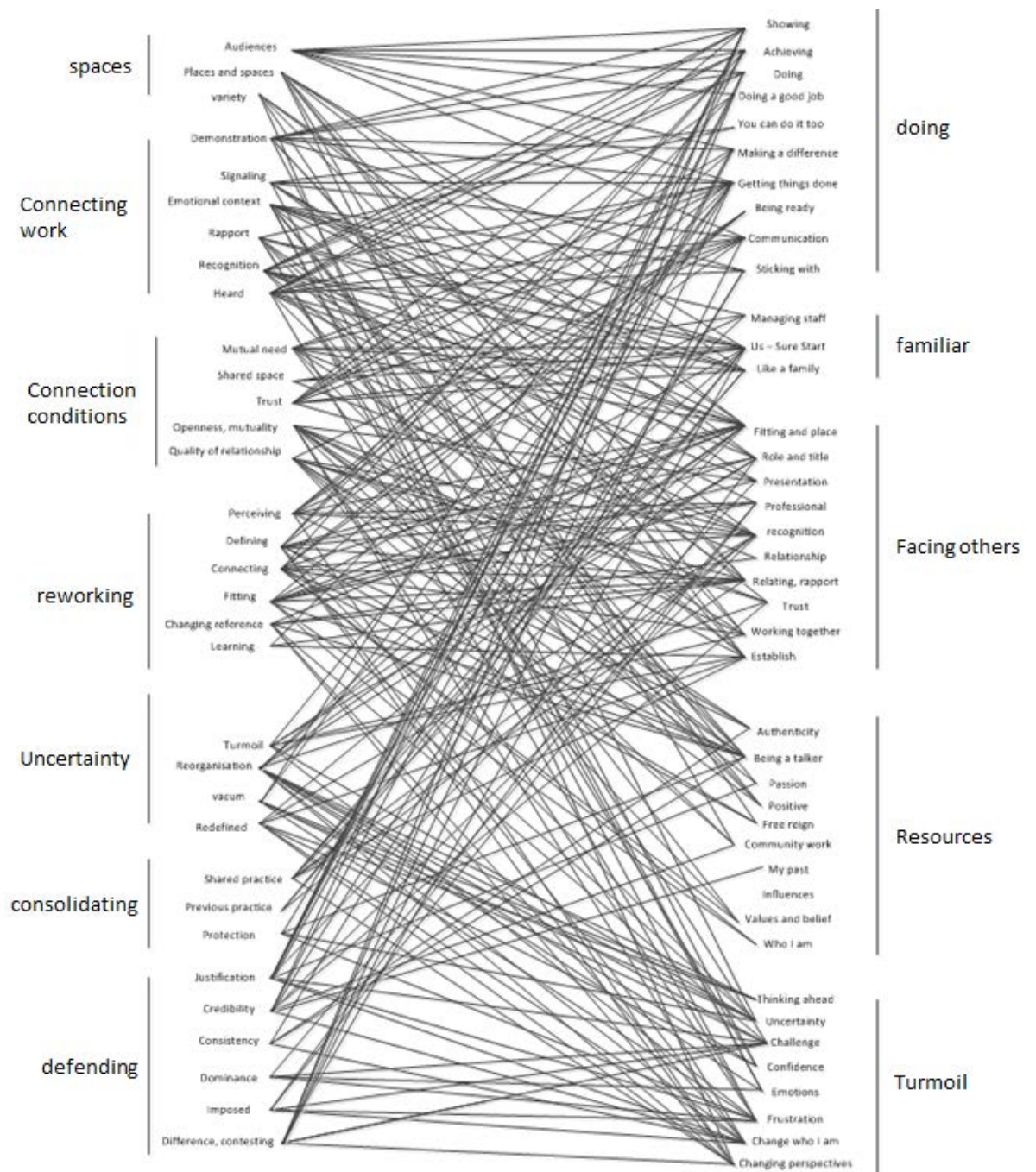
⁴⁵ "Signalling", "Feeling" and "Hearing".

⁴⁶ Being uncertain, frustrated and challenged.

⁴⁷ "Fitting", "Learning" and "Changing".

⁴⁸ Being uncertain about recognition, presentation and role.

Figure 37. Diane's self-practice talk map.



Beyond the self and self-practice talk maps, Diane's narratives generally reflect her claim that doing and explaining are intimately linked, an idea also discussed in the first theme in this chapter. The importance of connection is demonstrated when there is a *lack* of connection or alignment, so evident in Diane's account. Therefore, when Diane discusses doubts about her "being

a talker” (is it good for career progression?), she reviews its relevance as a central strand in her self-talk – because an ambiguous connection is less useful to her narrative self.

Finally, one of the ways Diane’s narrative connectedness is evident is in the way in which she can be insistent and confident about herself as a talker and ‘doer’, or someone able to relate. Despite her questions, it is the connections Diane makes with her own professional biography or ‘track record’ which support her claims.

General discussion: Coherence and structure in narrative identity

A number of key features can be observed when reviewing maps of self-talk. One of these is the inclusion of terms that might be expected to appear under the category of practices, themes such as ‘working with’, ‘influence’, ‘establish’, ‘recognise’ and so on. They are included here often in addition to appearing in the category of practices because they were also themes applied to ‘the self’. Participants would talk about these things as a way of telling or explaining about what sort of person they were. The basic characteristic of self-talk narratives containing (seemingly) talk of practices supports the insight gained throughout the data that ‘who I am’ and ‘what I do’ are linked in complex ways, and that the disclosure of self is achieved through what practices say, with some talk about practices being associated explicitly with the self. I have already discussed the idea of experience and active reference in the mimetic spiral: perhaps it is not surprising that ‘practices’ are used to signify things about the person who *does* those things. After all, practices have inherently illustrative and evidential elements, they are not empty claims or descriptions of who or what a participant is. Professional self-talk without talk of practices is not supported by the data, as practice-talk (owned and ascribed to participants) also helpfully has a quasi-legal status of demonstrating and proving to others.

Secondly, a review of the self-talk maps highlights another seemingly obvious characteristic: connections made by participants as they make

multiple and complex references to elements of configured narratives are not distributed evenly. In other words, one may see some narrative themes that connected to and anchored many other themes, themes that were 'pivotal'. Table two sets out a number of these key themes within participants self-talk and also highlights the connections these themes have to practices:

Table 2. Key self-talk themes and their connections to practices talk themes.

| Participant | Well connected themes within participants' self talk | Relationships these themes have with practice narrative themes (from practice<->self-talk relational maps) | Significance of relationships? (expressed 'as if', not participants' words). |
|-------------|--|--|--|
| Brenda | Competence | Motivating, group interactions, task freedom. | I wish to appear competent, this is sometimes challenging in fast talking groups. My competence comes from task freedom. [practices illustrate claim] |
| | 'The Hat' | Chaotic, time. | I use the idea of a 'hat' as a mode of being: focused, less emotion. This is required because I operate in a fast chaotic environment. [practices justify claim] |
| | Recognition | Recognition, aspirational figures, co-workers. | Recognition is important to me: this is what recognition does for me. [talk explains practices] |
| | Trials and tribulations | Family life, frustration, external constraint, unpredictable. | I talk about my life as 'trials and tribulations' and give you examples of it. [my talk focuses on how I am resilient and the experience I gain; it configures chaos] |
| Sharon | WOW factor | Task / child, practice focus, reputation. | WOW is a way of thinking about everything important about learning and children: creativity, wonder, innovation, enthusiasm. [talk 'holds together' things claimed as important] |
| | Creativity | Independence, personalising, encouraging reflection, collaboration. | My talk about what I can do in working with others enables me to talk about myself as creative [practices justify claim] |
| | Working with | Defining / reading, scanning, personalising, collaboration. | I do these things because I think working with others is important [talk and practices mutually constitutive] |
| | Influence | Signalling, positioning, helping me, recognition. | What I am doing when I signal and position is influencing. [talk explains practices] |
| Diane | Recognition | Trust, shared space, mutual need, heard, signalling. | I am looking to be recognised and I talk about the conditions needed for that. [Being recognised is a status achieved through practices] |
| | Establish | Turmoil, learning, rapport, recognition, places and spaces. | I am working in and experiencing turmoil, I am building rapport and gaining recognition: I am becoming established. [claim evidenced by practices]. |

| | | | |
|-------|--|---|---|
| | Relating / rapport | Changing reference, fitting, defining, quality of relationship. | I talk about what's changing and what I need to do in response; what I show here is that I'm relating to people, that's what I'm good at. [practices illustrate and talk explains this] |
| | Us – Sure Start | Shared space, mutual need, recognition, emotional context. | I talk about 'what I had' in Sure Start and associate with this [practices used to identify] |
| Chris | Making a difference | Setting out, social ethics, attending to people. | In doing these things, I'm showing what I am [practices illustrate talk] |
| | Ethics and values | Influencing, wider references, consistency. | My talk about behaving ethically is seen in what I want to achieve, the things I draw upon and how I behave. [talk explains a range of practices that they want to associate] |
| | Climbing and tour leading (biography, lessons) | Focus, learnt social skills, resonance, model / demonstrate, signals. | I talk about what I've learnt in tour leading. Climbing is used as a metaphor and template. [practices and talk mutually configure] |

What does this tell us about those well connected self-talk narratives? In reviewing the data, I argue that certain themes in participants' stories⁴⁹ become so well connected to other themes (acting as pivotal or organising points) because they are *useful in the mimetic project*: they are connected in a reciprocal relationship with practices that they explain, and those practices in turn show or illustrate what is being said. Examples of these relationships are summarised in the final column in the table above, which imagines phrases such as 'In doing these things I'm showing what I am' which is an example of a narrative having a strong explanatory character, as opposed to an empty claim or fiction which has less currency in when refigured back into practice.

Some elaboration and theoretical discussion is helpful here. I am saying that participants practices 'illustrate' or 'show' themselves: with reference to the theoretical frame of this thesis, this happens through the act of refiguration, as configured narratives are re-applied to practice, shaping practices in this process. Participants' self-talk prompts a change in practice. The following quotes from Brenda are therefore examples of talk about changing 'in the light of' self-talk:

⁴⁹ Column 2 in Table 2.

“...when you’re trying to get somebody on board, and you get them with a shared vision about thinking differently just for a minute and visualising something different.”

“...it is about thinking differently and it’s about trying to think positively and draw on your situations you have already been in and getting back *on* the roller coaster.”

“...it’s funny, actually, because since I’ve been doing this, I’ve been a little bit more aware of myself, but I recognise some things in people and I’ve been kind of like saying ‘I know where you are’ and you need to believe in yourself.”

In this quote, ‘the hat’ refers to narrative about a mode of focus and reduced emotion, where self-talk helps prepare for Brenda’s engagement with the world:

“...Because I like to roll with it, I like to be out of my comfort zone, I function with that hat on now and again...thinking differently.”

Ricoeur’s discussion of refiguration focuses on ways in which a text is ‘opened up’ in new ways the worlds of the reader. I argue that, through a range of feedback mechanisms including reflection and feedback from others, participants benefit from new ways of seeing as they become conscious of their story. In some ways, self-talk and talk of practices develop a mutual dependence, as the mimetic spiral connects the two as previously discussed. Practices are an opportunity to take the story forward as they demonstrate, illustrate and show what participants say about them.

I argue that participants in the study searched for connection and coherence as they talked with me and worked with visual artefacts. The connections they began to make, later represented in self-talk and practice-talk maps, established ‘pathways’ through the many potential routes though and configurations of the narrative field.

At the beginning of this chapter, I argued that the spiral of mimetic activity, which forces transformations of doing into self-talk (and vice versa) forces an adaptation of the narrative self. For example, as participants showed who they were, their self-talk was supported or needed to be adjusted. It is this *adjusting activity* which fine-tunes connections in self-talk. For example,

Brenda's practice-talk addresses her need to "juggle" and look for "short cuts":

"Because it's the thing you juggle all day every day. You try and do complex, fast moving stuff – that's the pressure. What you're trying to look for is short cuts to everything..."

For all participants, the movements and patterns of practice have the potential to shape changes to self-talk, as they open up new possibilities where connections or new activities can be reflected in new ways of talking about the self⁵⁰.

Figure 38. Participants moving and connecting narrative elements.



Further, the activities of recognising, assessing, comparing and moving potential narrative material was vital to the development of mature and stable self-talk as the act of telling, applying and re-telling stories in the mimetic spiral itself develops familiarity with them – of possible connections on the map. Generally, I suggest that the activity of the mimetic spiral leaves a patterning of connections (some of which we see represented in the maps) that then become a resource for choosing. Even within their limited time with me, participants demonstrated varying levels of dexterity in using well connected narratives, enabling, for example, Brenda to talk about 'rolling with it', or Sharon to demonstrate her confidence with ways of working:

"Just because we've always done that with that resource, doesn't mean to say that's the only way of using it. 'How about doing...' and thinking about themselves as resources, we don't always have to use you the same way, you don't always have to do the same thing, because if you always do what you've always did, you always get what you always got. If you're thinking, right, I'm stuck with this child, or this child is stuck at a particular point, it's no good doing the same

⁵⁰ Activities I observed in participants' configuration activities demonstrate a mirroring of these moving, patterning and fitting activities: visualising the process of configuration helped me see ways in which, as self-talk was reviewed, participant reviewed their metaphorical (or actual) narrative fields or maps.

thing again and again because they aint going to move, are they?
You've got to think beyond..."

The benefits of having a particular configuration of patterned connections also limit participants' ways of talking and doing. In a number of ways, participants' readings and options are limited because of the way these patterns have been 'laid down' over time. There are limited sets of possible configurations of self-talk. In this case, Chris talks about a set of narratives⁵¹ which he calls values:

"[so, your professional self is a performance but actually there are some parameters to that performance?] Yeah, I think so, that's where your values come in – they limit you, in that professional field, which I think is a good thing...in the right context, they drive you. But in the wrong context, for you, your values, they limit you [sort of a protection thing] Well, em.....a self protection thing. If you...that would be betraying your values it would be a dreadful world we would live in cos then you're just malleable."

Finally, I note that participants' self-narratives not only are complex as they exist in a potential 'field' of routes laid down by sustained mimetic activity, but individual narratives themselves are subject to refiguration⁵². Connections are not simply binary... Stories about one thing 'end up' being about something else, or have a dual function. In this first instance, Diane's doubting narratives about 'not being a manager' are "the things that have got us out the other side":

"...by doing the things that I do, by being the person who I am. So the things that I was doubting about myself are the things that have got us out the other side. ...so you see, it's all good!"

In summary, this section has built upon the idea of the adaptive process of the mimetic spiral⁵³ and has shown the importance of connections to the development of the narrative self for participants. Further, I have identified the basic connection between participants' *showing* and *telling* activities. I have highlighted the existence of 'pivotal' narratives which connect within self-talk and between self and practice talk (Appendices 11.1-12.4), and have discussed the responsive relationship between these two categories,

⁵¹ Which I have discussed as patterns or routes on the narrative field.

⁵² Hence the metaphor of a narrative "field" is not a static one.

⁵³ Theme 1.

where changes in practice relate to self-talk (and vice versa). Standing back from the data, I have identified connections between the adjusting⁵⁴ activities that occur in practice and in self-talk. Finally, I have noted the way that connected, stable patterns of narrative support improvising and also shape the development of self-talk.

Theme 3: Narrative identity as ecosystem

“Yes.....so it is quite an in depth, isn't it? There are so many layers, when you look at it.” (Sharon)

Understanding the development of self-narratives has so far been within the metaphor of the narrative field and the action of the mimetic spiral within it. This has involved identifying narratives in terms of their position and movement on this field. In this section, I consider the significance of *types* of narrative that can easily be identified within the data. I shall argue that highly configured self-talk is not only the result of explaining and demonstrating but is sustained by other ‘types’ of talk which defend, maintain and position it within the active narrative field I have described. It is these functions⁵⁵ that connect a study of self-talk to situations of dialogue, or narrative practices. In addition, I shall give examples of the conditions under which sorts of self-talk are refigured in action. I shall also show examples of the ‘layering’ or sedimentation of narratives briefly described at the end of the previous section.

Chris: Narrative identity as ecosystem

It became evident very early on in the process of spending time with all the participants, including Chris that talk ‘about’ themselves was often a small part of the body of narrative material that I would capture in our sessions. Chris offered the least amount of direct claims about himself, but the closest he came to doing this was in the way he used others’ evaluations of

⁵⁴ E.g. Fitting, comparing, assessing.

⁵⁵ Defending, sustaining and so on.

himself⁵⁶. Perhaps this was because his self-talk was less inter-connected, or his relatively recent entrance into early years had restricted the numbers of mimetic 'cycles' those narratives had been through. In this case, the function of others' evaluations became particularly important.

However, a different set of narrative material can be identified for Chris when his practice-talk is examined. Chris's practice-talk contained implicit messages about who he was. Specifically, his practice-talk contained a collegial element which allowed him to avoid domination of others and to use humour, both things that showed and positioned him with very little 'claiming' talk about who he was:

"...anyone could come and talk to me and people did come and talk to me, at quite a junior level and em, it was something I encouraged and I always spoke to everyone equally"

".....there was a lot of banter and no one took each other seriously in that respect; everyone respected each other but there wasn't any obsequiousness or any bowing down or that sort of thing..."

In addition to showing that he was collegiate, in reviewing the transcripts of our sessions, I was quickly able to identify ways in which Chris used different sorts of talk to direct and focus others, drawing on walking and climbing themes of purpose and focus. In this sort of talk, Chris indicated important messages about himself, if not in an explicit way. I certainly was able to pick up indications of his being purposeful, dedicated and practical when we talked about how climbing metaphors may have influenced his leadership practice. In other respects, Chris's self-talk was implicit in his practice talk, illustrated well in how he prioritised consistency, which reflected on what *sort* of person he was:

"...you're always mindful of what you say and what you do because people are always watching, em, and you have to make sure that what you say and what you do marry up. It's no good saying one thing and doing the complete opposite because then people won't trust what you say."

Like all participants, Chris has a range of what could be called 'back room' (Goffman, 1959/1990) narratives that he configured with me in our sessions

⁵⁶ Illustrated in use of quotes such as "such as "got things done", "made things happen", that he was "a nice guy"; and affirmations of "we've seen quite a lot of you".

together. I suggested to Chris that my own term for these was 'practical ethics', referring to bigger stories such as making a difference and treating people equally. These narratives framed other narratives, providing an evaluative function for practice-talk and self-talk: his big stories were non-negotiable and provided a context for the configuration of self-talk in our sessions, being rooted in his own biography and formative events. Whilst Chris talked about how to treat others and making an impact with his team, they seemed to me to be relatively more stable, 'higher level' narratives: he did not need them to be part of his day to day talk.

Like Diane, Chris spoke about 'we'. Specifically, he talked about "This is how we work" with reference to the locality leadership team he was part of, when introducing new members. Like other participants, his role included the building of shared vision with a team and his professional identity was therefore invested with identification with others with whom a shared approach could be forged. The phrase "this is how we work", like so many others, performed a dual function of both instructing and signalling something about himself.

In addition to talk which overtly claims and positions, we can suggest that a different form of positioning occurs through what is *not* said. For Chris, this is achieved partly through his separation of personal and professional narratives:

"With time, as I get to know people I will open up more, the real me. But I suppose I consciously hide away my 'self' until 'OK, well I can show a bit more here to this person' and er... I am very conscious about how much I give away. You know, peripheral stuff, married, child that sort of stuff, you know, what I do in my spare time that's...the real me, to colleagues I very rarely give away, very rarely and it goes back to what I was saying earlier, trying to keep work / life and work home very separate."

Even within this quote one gets the idea that this is not a simple, static separation of personal and professional. Like many of the types of content and function we find in participants' narratives, it is carefully balanced and presented. When we talk about whether he could have worked in a car salesroom, Chris notes;

“I could have done that for a short time, I suspect I probably wouldn’t have lasted very long because the overlap wasn’t enough...”

Being sensitive to contexts and audiences, Chris, like other participants, carefully manages the amount of disclosure of ‘personal’ details;

“I can be more open with my peers...putting on a display in some ways for your team because you’re constantly trying to get the message across because you want them to get the things that you want, but with my peers, and certainly in previous, you could be more open with ‘I’m really struggling with this’ ..I don’t think this policy is the right thing to do, but we’ve got to enact it’ you know, express your misgivings about things – you can’t really do that with a staff team because it gets potentially twisted out of context or it upsets them, if you’re telling them the message, you’ve got to say ‘this is the message, it’s great and let’s crack on with it’ even if you don’t fully believe it, because that’s what you’re paid to do and if you’re starting to spread doubt within the staff team about the messages you’re telling, erm, because you personally have doubts about it, you’re not doing your job, really.”

In other ways, Chris structures and separates types of narrative. Like others, he configures a separate strand talk to give him space to doubt or reflect. In this respect, he chooses not to configure, or connect, narratives for his team with other, more personal sense-making narratives that he shared with his peers or myself. There are therefore separately configured narratives deployed in different ways to different audiences: *one* story is no use. However, ways in which types of narratives are separated or connected is done carefully, illustrated in the ways in which Chris needs to utilise quotes from others ‘about’ him.

Sharon: Narrative identity as ecosystem

Sharon’s background and role as an educator may have led to her presenting more explicit claims about herself to others than Chris. Some of these themes are now familiar: being ‘early years’, being an educator, creative, quirky, determined and agile are some of the dominant self-talk themes. These were one type of narrative; the direct claims about Sharon’s professional self.

Beside this smaller type of talk, a large body of talk around experience and learning dominated. Supporting others in their practice means that talk about experience was important. It is not surprising that talk about supporting others, providing evidence of her sustained interest in children's learning, connecting learning experiences and so on took centre stage in her talk with me. This is a broad category of talk, and Sharon demonstrated expertise in improvising around this theme and using it to achieve several different things. As such, it is a versatile framing narrative or big story.

Sharon's discussion of using a child focus is particularly interesting in what it achieves for her. In particular, I became fascinated in the way in which the practice of 'child-focusing' represented a way of Sharon focusing on her agenda, as opposed to the personal interests of the head teacher or childcare worker. 'Child-focus' narratives and practices legitimised her practice-talk, and provided her with a rich seam of connected narratives on which to improvise. The effect was to focus talk on productive territory for her.

Another type of practice-talk did a similar thing, focusing on *introduction* and *connection*; used in meeting others for the first time, or in re-connecting with staff in settings she was visiting again. Sharon gave the metaphor of "flirting" when introducing herself to head teachers, and we discussed the performative and signalling functions of a cheeky wink, or the 'add on' comment which indicated she was wonderful and would be very useful for them. One key feature of her introducing and connecting work is Sharon's ability to improvise her use of narrative resources;

"it depends on the audience – a head teacher will get a different version to what a Children's Centre person would get, or a childminder would get, or a parent would get, yes the head teacher would get very much more the education to justify that I have...oh, what's the word...not qualified, but maybe, yes, qualified to speak and when I talk to parents I talk as a parent and that gives me, what's the word...it gives you that authority to speak about parenting things, and when you talk to a child it's almost like you're drawing on the childlike element to give you credibility, credibility to whoever you speak with, you pick, you cherry pick the key bits that are important for that audience"

Additionally, she talked on several occasions about remembering details and making a good first impression, where seemingly unimportant details were in fact seen as critical to establishing goodwill, engaging others and supporting reciprocity.

Behind talk used in practice, Sharon identified another ‘type’ of talk when we worked together on her table top assemblage. She jokingly referred to talk about *choice* and *noticing*⁵⁷ as her “dodgy corner”. This type of talk represented a necessary counterbalance to talk about creativity and child-focus, with one relying on the other. As I reflected on our conversations, I came to think about this type of talk as *enabling self-talk* which helped hold her narratives together. Another example of this for me was Sharon’s talk about being the person in the shop or in the queue that people approached with a question, or offered help.

As with Chris, Sharon’s talk about “we” formed an important part of her talk, but in a different way. Whereas Chris used “we” to talk about collective identification with peers, Sharon emphasised the legitimacy of her leadership in practice through emphasising her influence and value to practitioners. Elsewhere, Sharon talks about herself as someone who supports and leads, both activities that require collective identification. There is therefore a type of talk needed to illustrate this connection, and to an extent, to challenge the authenticity of ‘official’ leadership:

“...the practitioners, were still coming to me, people were still referring things to me and they still say, ‘we see you more.. because we know that you’re there to support us and because you know, because you’re in sessions with us, you actually come and find us and say how’s things going? If you’ve had a busy session, you stick your head round the door and you help us clear up and you chat with us... and *they don’t.*” (Sharon)

Perhaps because she felt the need to legitimise herself, Sharon was very aware of her defensive strategies, illustrated here as we talked about the groupings on her table top assemblage:

⁵⁷ Where she could say she was able to walk away anytime, or could point out how she noticed everything.

“But you see this is the more sinister side of me, up here, and I’ve put it at a little distance...this is ‘I’ve jumped and I’ve chosen to have my freedom a little bit’ you know I went part time, gone part time, and I also know I can just walk out of that door. So for me, it’s always there in the background ...it’s not...yes, I love my job, and I am the biggest child, and it’s all about the doing and ‘wouldn’t it be boring...’ but at the end of the day if it did really, really, really get on top of me, that’s my get out up there, that’s the...escape tunnel over there.”

This sort of talk provides Sharon with a way of signalling the conditions she needs to sustain the sort of self-talk she has about freedom, “wow” and creativity. I also saw this when I spoke with Sharon about whether she would take the job offered to her in the light of her redundancy. She may have joked about needing her new job to involve play dough, but she illustrated her condition seriously enough:

“There are six of us ring fenced and there are three of those posts. So it’s a fifty percent chance of getting one of... and is it something I want? [yes, yes...*but how do you approach that?*] If I can’t have my play dough...Glittery. Lavender scented, enhanced play dough!”

Finally, I have already drawn attention to Sharon’s work in our fourth session on ‘orbiting’ narratives around situations, where she explained her awareness of a rich resource of potential types of narrative resources which could be drawn upon. This provides a suitable context in which to summarise the examples of types of narrative listed here: explicit claims, versatile use of the big story of learning and experience, use of child-focus, connecting talk, enabling self-talk and talk which legitimised Sharon’s own practice of leadership.

Brenda: Narrative identity as ecosystem

Like Chris and Sharon, my work with Brenda resulted not in a single ‘narrative’ but many different narratives and talk of narrative practices. Beginning with one type of narrative, her explicit claims about herself, Brenda variously identified herself as a solution focused person, a problem solver, juggler, someone who was experienced and resilient. In our sessions together, Brenda was reluctant to put forward claims about who she was.

Like other participants, Brenda's claims about 'who she was' were not her main focus.

In between frequent discussion of Brenda's "trials and tribulations", or her busy and unpredictable life, I was able to identify a significant type of talk: that of structure and structuring practices. Brenda mentioned the theme of structuring explicitly in several ways, including the need to have structure to make her professional life work, and the use of "the hat" as a mental mode that helped her focus, think and act in challenging situations. In many ways, Brenda's structure talk, like Sharon's talk about choice and careful noting, performed an important function: it *controlled the way parts of her story related*. Like other participants, Brenda had many narrative themes and types, including some that potentially contradicted one another. Structure and compartmentalising talk preserved the integrity of each part, and allowed Brenda to configure narratives in a careful way, given her concern about presentation and competence.

Following Goffman (1959/1990), what I identify as 'back room' talk acts as another form of structuring, and represents a distinction that can be seen in other participants' narratives between professional presentation and reflective or sense-making activity. In our sessions together, Brenda was open about concerns and questions she had about who she was as a professional. This is reflected in her talk with me about how she was perceived, whether she was thinking quickly enough and reasons why she was reliant for opportunities coming along for example. These questions were more than passive background to her professional narrative; her accounts show that they intersected with the presentation of her professional self and in her ability at times to confidently configure a self-narrative⁵⁸. In this respect, as I will illustrate with Diane, questions are an important but potentially destabilising element in constantly changing self-narratives.

In addition to 'back room' talk, Brenda's narratives clearly contain examples

⁵⁸ Brenda often found it challenging to recall the details of previous sessions, and took time to configure her table-top assemblage in session four.

of practice-talk with her team and other professionals, as she led her service. Brenda utilised experience narratives with her team, and clearly demonstrated her experience as a major asset. This type of talk was selective and “for a purpose”, characterised by a focus on empowering and supporting staff. Beyond this, and despite her questions, Brenda’s ‘positive’ approach was a hallmark of her general talk about embracing opportunities, from the idea she would “roll with it” through to her reflections on embracing new projects and challenges.

Elsewhere, some of Brenda’s narratives needed to connect the potential dislocation between practices and self-talk. In this quote, the phrase “this is how I’ll appear” performs some important connecting work:

“...I’ve said to them, when I’m stressed, this is how I’ll appear, or, this is how you may see me”

Taken by itself, the claim to be approachable may not have an obvious partner in practices, especially if Brenda appears to be ‘stressed’. The credibility of her claim about herself may be weakened. However, self-talk about being approachable is sustained in practice through the provision of “this is how I’ll appear” to explain the apparent contradiction. A claim about the self is made with an understanding of the situation it is made within and how it will be received and used.

Diane: Narrative identity as ecosystem

Like all participants, but perhaps most of all, Diane experienced substantial and sustained organisational and professional change during the course of our conversations. Her story is one of questioning, showing and confirming her professional identity. Diane identified herself variously as a worker, a talker, someone who related and collaborated, someone ‘like’ the parents she worked with, and someone who got things done. These identity claims, like those of other participants, existed within an ecosystem of diverse narrative content and practices.

One strand of narrative content that is significant in Diane’s questioning of

her own professional identity is that of her own biography. I previously quoted her as saying; “I went travelling, come back had a baby, went to university – did everything backwards”. I came to see this as one indication of Diane’s ambiguous professional heritage: authentic and experienced⁵⁹ but less formal and without a ‘traditional’ social care or education label. As well as a potential source of ambiguity for her self-talk, Diane’s professional biography is linked with a narrative about aspiration – for herself and parents she works with. Her practice talk reflects the importance of being able to say that *she has done it* – and you can too, and is a type of legitimising talk.

Linked to this idea of aspiration are a set of narratives around doing, working hard and achieving, which she draws on heavily to ‘see her through’ the period of change and challenge as the service is re-organised and she loses her roots in a specific Sure Start service. Talk of being a talker, and do-er is related in particular to the Sure Start community, and parents she works with, so she says;

“A bit like ‘I’m mam and this is my family’ this is how we work ...come and see our family and see how we all work together.”

In this sense, her ‘doing’ narratives perform a much needed *anchoring* function, as Diane relates her professional self to others;

“...so we’ve had a laugh and a carry on, but that’s what’s made it work, that’s what made the team work...if you’ve had a crap week and things aren’t great, it’s the only time that we’re going to sit down as a team, almost like a family, you sit down and have your tea of a night time, and you find out what’s being going on”

Like Chris, Diane related her self-talk to others, emphasising conditions for working together, honesty and openness, weaving an ethical strand through her talk. As with Chris, talk about ‘we’ also implied aspects of Diane’s self-talk:

“I don’t think they would work *with* you or want to work with you if they thought you weren’t being open and honest – and especially with parents, cos parents, they’ll tell you straight away...they’ll just tell us to pee off, they wouldn’t give us the time of day”

In more reflective talk within sessions with me, Diane configures a strand of

⁵⁹ Useful for community development work.

talk which provides her with space to ask questions, and possibly anticipate changes she may need to make to her own story. This is evident in questions about the 'other', and questions about what Diane 'needed to be'. The first, questioning 'the other' relates to senior managers and (mainly) health colleagues who either were imposing their own professional priorities and order, or were either not acting at all or were acting with no knowledge of 'Sure Start' within the context of the reorganisation. Diane clearly was exasperated at both of these things, and sought to understand what their intentions were, or how they may be engaged. Both contrasted with Diane's own self-talk about being a 'do-er' and someone who related. However, within this process, a narrative space is created to consider whether she needs to be more like others who are different to her.

General discussion: Narrative identity as ecosystem

All of the participants in the study provided illustrations of different types of talk, both in terms of content and practices. These illustrations enrich one's understanding of how professional talk is far from one homogeneous 'story'. In the light of this, the narrative field I have previously described can be seen as an ecosystem of types of content and practices which relate in a dynamic and systemic way, with types of talk having roles in maintaining, defending, showing, justifying and separating the narrative self. Examining examples of difference within participants' narratives highlights key functions that different narratives play. I shall discuss these here before reflecting upon the overall significance of difference within participants' narratives.

Firstly, I have recognised that for all participants, some form of core narrative or small number of framing narratives are required around which a stable narrative self may be configured. In all cases, this was linked to professional (and personal) biography, highlighting the evidential value of the historical *idem* self discussed by Ricoeur, emphasising identification, sameness and consistency of character.

Beyond establishing sameness, a core narrative must have the ability to *adapt and change*, and so requires mechanisms for anticipating and responding. I gave one example of narratives that allowed participants to work with questions or contradictions about their self-talk: for example, does Diane need to change? or...do others see Brenda as competent?. Whilst this 'back room' talk occurs, I have also identified types of talk which legitimise, facilitate or defend self-talk, emphasising the dynamic status of narrative identity – so Brenda explains apparent contradictions about 'how she might appear' and Chris offers evaluations from others about the sort of person he is in the absence of using explicit self-talk in dialogue with others.

All these *types of talk* illustrate diversity within participants' narrative fields, and in turn require other types of talk that organise, separate and generally help avoid contradictions. In addition to the resources provided by Ricoeur, the connections to Goffman's (1959/1990) ideas of performance of self are clear: performers provide a 'front' which seeks to define the situation, there is a backstage where performances are rehearsed, and the act of performing requires skill, awareness and control. Brenda explicitly discussed this in themes of control and structure in her metaphor of 'the hat', and Chris noted the importance of maintaining consistency and keeping things separate in dialogue with staff.

'Big Stories' hold together and make sense of multiple strands, are tasked with saying what the story *means*; they have an ontological status and evaluative and framing function. These big stories are relatively stable: Chris is proud to be a public servant, Sharon has the 'wow factor', Diane gets things done with other people and Brenda is experienced and solution focused. In our fourth session, Sharon indicated to me that these are the "big, big stories":

"I think you can't have too many big st....if they are going to be the big, big stories, it's like having a favourite, you can't have more than one favourite can you"

Underneath these organising self-talk, or big stories, smaller stories seem to be less connected and often refer to specific activities or time frames. Whilst some are stable and persist, others are emerging and are being tested

through multiple mimetic cycles of explaining and demonstrating. Differences and links between stable and fluid self-talk are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Layers of narratives: stable / fluid and descriptive / evaluative.

| Participant | Big (evaluative) stories: relatively stable / relatively evaluative | Example narrative elements: relatively fluid and context dependant / relatively descriptive. |
|-------------|--|---|
| Diane | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I work hard • I have achieved • I work well with others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I went travelling, come back had a baby, went to university – did everything backwards. • Setting up parents' groups and projects • You've got to trust • No-one knows what's going on • They don't understand what I do • Somebody needs to take a lead • I work with everybody, I don't feel that I'm better than anyone • Fighting your corner / carving out your role • Lost my place |
| Brenda | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am experienced • I want to appear competent • I experience 'trials and tribulations' • Change is good | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant others who have helped me • Being given new responsibilities • Stories of helping families in the miners' strike • I have a 'work hat' • I am solution focused • Experienced so many changes • Talk about juggling lots of things • You can't get it all done • You need some acknowledgement • I travel around, I collect post-it notes |
| Chris | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proud to be a public servant • I want to make a difference • Climbing has guided my life • I attend to people | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking on a new role • Individual stories of climbing and tour leading • This is how we work • From cadets to climbing to tour leading: what I learnt • What others say about me • Get things done, straight to the point • Cultural comparisons • Being grounded in your values • Everyone is important |
| Sharon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have the 'wow factor' • It's all about the children • I choose • I am an Early Years educator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this good enough for my child? • Tales of working in schools • Trips I have been on and experiences I have had • Motivating childcare practitioners • I hate writing things up • 'In my professional judgement' • Stories of being looked to / presence • Talk about narrative strategies • Personal biography |

Identifying *types* and functions of narrative content is significant to this study. Beyond simply describing a list of direct claims about participants' narrative selves, this section has provided an insight into how these claims are constructed and maintained. Narrative identity is dependant upon a set of narratives practices which not only configure stable self-talk, but provide participants with the capacity to adapt and change, to defend and justify and

to organise and structure it. Examples of these practices have been discussed in this chapter.

This 'ecosystem' of narrative practices and content has further significance for the development of participants' narrative selves when related to specific concepts within the theoretical chapter of this thesis. Specifically, when these types of talk are looked at as configuration activity, or identity work, the significance of *difference* between, and the relating of, elements within the narrative field emerge. Ricoeur (1975/2003, 1981, 1983/1990) discusses the importance of difference in his discussion of the work of the imagination and metaphor, which are associated with the creation of new meaning, and in turn to the development of the narrative self. Ricoeur (1981, p.39; 1983/1990, p.ix) describes this new meaning as *semantic innovation*.

Semantic innovation, or new meaning, is generated through the juxtaposition and alignment of ideas within configuration activity, where "distance" between semantic fields is reduced, and "apperception, the sudden glimpse" (1986/2008, p.169) of new ways of being can be obtained as ideas are connected and patterned in new ways, as participants have done in this study. Ideas and themes previously separated in experience are brought together in the act of configuring a narrative, and require new ways of talking to relate and connect disjointed elements. Connecting and relating elements demands imaginative activity, and the "restructuring [of] semantic fields" (Ibid. p.169). This activity, argues Ricoeur, exercises a heuristic force with a "capacity to open or unfold new dimensions of reality by means of our suspension of belief in an earlier description" (Ibid. p.171). This capacity is made possible in part through the existence and relative movement of *different* narrative elements necessary for the work of metaphor.

To summarise, I have demonstrated how different types of narrative content are significant to the construction of participants' narrative identities, as they support imaginative and metaphorical work. Once material is established, I have shown that different functions performed by types of narrative are vital for the maintenance and persistence of this identity.

Theme 4: Social mechanisms for the narrative self

This final theme of findings and discussion focuses on the implications of the previous sections. So far, I have discussed professional identity as an adaptive process, where it is 'shown' and 'told' in the context of the three phases of Ricoeur's mimetic spiral. In my second theme in this chapter, I emphasised the connections within self-talk and between self and practice talk, drawing attention to the patterning of narrative identity and the significance of structure in relation to it. In the previous theme, I drew attention to the significance of different narrative *content* and *practices* (e.g. defending, legitimating, separating talk) for participants, where the practice of narrative selfhood was shown to be an adaptive process.

In this section, I build on the idea of narrative identity as an adaptive process, and examine in more detail the significance of adaptation in the mimetic project. I also return to Ricoeur's (2005) own themes about recognition and reputation, but extend his claims by focusing on the *professional project* as the unit of analysis and emphasising its reliance on the *social practices of others*.

Chris: Social mechanisms for the narrative self

It seemed easier for me than for Chris to see a professional trajectory in his story. Whilst it was not immediately obvious to him, I was able to suggest a structure or plot as parts were brought together (Figure 22). One of these trajectories was towards more explicit 'helping' and practice of what I called his practical ethics, as he moved from tour leading to work with young people, then in the early years. Reviewing his 'journey' helped us both to see ways in which certain narratives were given space to build and improvised in response to new circumstances. So, themes of purpose and attentiveness are mentioned in relation to climbing and tour leading, but are refigured to apply in a more metaphorical and motivational sense in an early years context, one that Chris did not plan to enter. Put simply, his circumstances

afforded 'space' to continue an existing narrative, but in adapting or refiguring it to new circumstances, it is refined.

Whilst Chris had a set of narratives related to climbing and tour leading, he recognised that they would not 'automatically' carry forward in his professional project. This was illustrated for me when we spoke about one of his jobs where offices were co-located with a sales firm with a macho, driven work culture. We talked about values and the idea of 'fitting'. In our second session he said;

"I may work well within the outdoor pursuits industry or within the early years but I wouldn't be doing very well if I worked in...DFS sofa sales, I suspect – my values and the ways I work may not 'fit' with the leadership that is required"

The idea of 'fitting' is one explored in this section, where, in Chris's case, professional identity is situated and is suited to interacting in certain professional 'worlds'. Chris highlights the dynamic status of his narrative identity by highlighting that it is something demonstrated. He added;

"you need to adapt; to demonstrate that, you know, your professional identity for *that* place..."

As such, it is *afforded* opportunities to develop, or is *constrained by* the professional 'world' as it is deployed by Chris. In our talk of professional interactions, this was illustrated when Chris reflected on an encounter with a local head teacher, where he read micro signals such as the flicker of an eye;

"And so what am I signalling to him in that situation? Am I signalling that I'm powerful and...professional – going back to the suit and tie? Em, and someone to be wary of?"

In his practice-talk, identity is something enacted, and the potential for Chris to 'be' himself is dependant on mutually constructed spaces. In the same way that I have previously discussed how participants identify and recognise elements of their own narratives, Chris (and in this case, a head teacher) are engaged in mutual identification and recognition. A shared language is established which sets the terms for the demonstration of self. Chris repeats

this in another conversation with me about his new Senior Early Years practitioner when he says;

“Well, I think I’m still sussing her out and she’s still sussing me out.”

Chris talked about his previous setting in positive terms, noting that “anyone could come and talk to me and people did come and talk to me”. In this context, Chris was able to share more personal things about himself in a context of mutual recognition. He was able to emphasise the social achievement of professional identity when I asked him ‘who else makes your narratives’ when working on his table-top assemblage in session four:

“...well, everyone you meet with, isn’t it? ...cos like you said earlier, we were talking about the cadet force and that you can’t do this arc in isolation if you were just completely by yourself in the world cos it’s all about interaction with other people so who else helps makes your narratives is people is people you interact with throughout your life, so everyone is your answer....”

Chris also highlighted how others are important to the establishment of professional identity in a different way, by examining a case of distinct *lack* of recognition. In our fourth session, Chris recalled a situation where he was called a liar, something we recognised that challenged an important strand of his self-talk; being truthful and ethical;

“one of the team members said ‘do the unions know about this?’ and I’d asked this question to our managers, at a meeting previously ‘are the unions aware of this?’ and the answer was ‘yes’ so I said ‘yes, they do’ then that member of staff rang the union who they didn’t and made out I was lying...and they said that in the...they didn’t say that word liar...she did, she did actually use that word... and I think in her eyes she just sees that I am a liar which is then, it’s the first time I’ve ever been accused of that. [Which runs counter to what you’re trying to...] Yeah. Runs counter not to what I’m trying to do, but what I am. Because I am not a liar, I do tell the truth and unfortunately, she’s a very vocal member of the team so she’s got a lot of sway within the team in that respect.”

The significance of others’ assessment and validation is striking; in this case, one person’s judgement challenges something that Chris configures as part of his self-talk. Ricoeur’s discussion of *idem* self draws attention to its value as a record, where a person is seen to be the ‘same’. The *idem* self is characterised by sameness and consistency and must be recognised, and so

challenges such as this highlight just how much Chris's identity is reliant on others' assessment, identification and recognition. Others' assessments and recognition are *social acts* – and not simply 'their opinions'. As Chris notes;

"It's like that phrase 'give a dog a bad name' – changes the way you then react and then become, depending on the reactions you get from other people."

Recognition was also an issue for Chris in adapting to his role within a wider locality team of other senior leaders, where his idem⁶⁰ identity related who he was to the rest of the early years team. In this context, he considers that;

"...you're representing your service, I suppose, for the want of a better phrase, with other services and you don't want them to think it's a poorly run...or it's a bunch of amateurs, you know, in that service, all they do is play with fluffy toys and babies"

Through all of our conversations, I was aware of the way in which metaphorical 'spaces' to show self are part of a professional project occurring in time. Chris's self-talk may be fixed as text in my transcripts, but this is a snapshot of the dynamic process I have discussed. Chris gives an example of his awareness of time passing on one particular instance by relating to children's development;

"I'm conscious that we don't have much time, you know, if you've got those three years, thirty six months, to make a difference, realistically, to have a real impact, you know, if things don't happen quickly then we're losing time. If somebody takes a whole term to implement, which is three months, then that's ten percent of our useable time, that's a lot of time in a child's window of opportunity and as you say, a child develops massively in three months, so I'm finding that a frustration."

Relating this sense of passing time to his *own* identity work, I was able to see ways in which the development of Chris's self-talk relied on taking advantage of new circumstances, his ability to create spaces for demonstrating self in his day to day practice, and his ability to think about purpose and destination.

⁶⁰ Identification, or association.

Sharon: Social mechanisms for the narrative self

The idea of social 'spaces' for the reception and deployment of the professional self is also seen in Sharon's stories. In her narratives, this space is characterised by qualities of freedom and creativity. Sharon sums up her thoughts in our second session in this way;

“...it's no good being 'wow' without your freedom and it's no good having freedom if you haven't got the 'wow' to take up the potential.”

As Sharon identifies what sort of reception and identification she requires to have the “wow factor”, she signals what sort of connections she wants, and ways in which she does not want to be tied down. Further, she demonstrates a recognition that her professional identity is social, as she seeks to manage its external reference points, and what sort of social currency it has. Sharon demonstrates a sophisticated awareness of this identity work, aware of the potential of others to facilitate or restrict who she is. When we talk about her recording of interventions with children, shows that this facilitating or restricting can be done by systems or practices as well as others. Here, the form filling gets in the way;

“Well, it doesn't reflect me, does it? It's that tight, very formal very prim, very proper type of approach and you are confined and it's that closing it in and closing it down, pinning people down”

In session four, Sharon was in what she feared would be a restrictive situation, as she accepts a part time position in an advisory service, whilst recognising its' impact;

“I'm on reigns, now. Huh huh u hu! ...It's almost like one of those dog leads, you know, the dog goes running off and they press the button and it goes 'twang' and brings it back again!”

Restriction represents a threat to Sharon – she told me that “I need to be engaged, to have that challenge and excitement”. Sharon's comment here illustrates the need for all participants, in different ways, to be able to innovate and keep their stories moving. When she looks from the outside at teachers in schools, she notes;

“...you almost see that teachers are ‘stuck’ in that culture, whereas I can go out into the community, well, I do go out into the community... Freedom is the distinctive difference.”

Sharon’s self-talk needs to be able to *adapt*, something she cannot do when she is ‘fixed’ by people, practices or circumstances. Adaptive behaviour is the key characteristic of the mimetic spiral, as practices have to be explained and explanations need to be demonstrated. Sharon demonstrates a concern that this process will grind to a halt, directly challenging her self-talk claim of creativity.

Elsewhere, Sharon powerfully highlights the way in which others can facilitate, and not just restrict mimetic activity or identity work. At a simple level, others provide a mirror in which Sharon can see the person she is. In our second session she reflects on a practitioner she has influenced;

“Ok, she’s not totally...me, because nobody ever can be, because nobody can ever totally be another person, but even if she’s beginning to think”

Adding;

“...and she’s actually turned round to me and said – ‘I’ve noticed my observations are more like your observations...”

Beyond the value in seeing herself in others, other people perform a much more active social role in Sharon’s identity work, taking the activity beyond her, distributing it and making it viral. This effect is recognised by others;

“I’ll tell you something, a couple of the girls, and they came back from their interviews from all these jobs saying ‘oh, I mentioned your name’ and one of them came back and said, she said she was telling them all about the school groups, with you and the woman, she said, who is sort of my senior she could see her eyes light up, and it was almost like...‘I could see through her brain’ this practitioner was saying, it was like she was thinking ‘oh no, another [Sharon] clone!’”

Illustrated in this way, Sharon’s professional project is not an individual achievement. The role of others goes beyond the function of recognition, and involves others sharing, reinforcing, adapting and extending who Sharon is, and for others, “...they can hang their experiences. It’s like handing down a

folk tale". This is something Sharon recognised in our fourth session, where she noted;

"I think as you talk to practitioners they in a way can kind of adopt your experience, they haven't experienced themselves, but when they see that similar thing it may jog in their mind...Stepping stones, yes, yes, something to hang their experiences on"

Whilst Sharon's identity work is also done by and benefits others, the impression from her transcripts is that this does not 'just happen'. As with all participants, a stream of moments are presented which can act to *structure or restrict* or *facilitate* the expansion of her professional identity. Sharon discussed with me her practices of noticing and reflecting in session one, where she recognises that what is presented is "just the wrapper";

"...but then I have my little magic smile, and that seems to work. I think it's having that aura as well, if you go in as a very dour person with that, but if you say the title with a smile and say 'that's a fabulous title, isn't it' ..heh!"

Even making sure she is the one who welcomes people through the door at a high profile conference is an opportunity to be the sort of person she talks about;

"... 'Welcome to (local authority area), thank you for coming to our conference' but it is, it is about that personal touch ... It's that personal service, it's that care, you know, sort of... when you go in and you're looking for clothes and the shop assistant that will go the extra mile – it's being the fabulous girl, it's being, going, that extra mile..."

These sorts of expansive practices make 'space' for identity work through small, significant, frequent moments in Sharon's story. They work alongside, and exploit her *reputation*, where consistent demonstration has inscribed what sort of person Sharon is. Sharon makes reference to her reputation through comments such as;

"... 'if you chopped [Sharon] in half, life a piece of rock, it says early years all the way through"

And,

"I'm notorious for being quirky and seeing things outside of the box"

Despite these comments, Sharon's narratives are of doing: like all participants, self-talk⁶¹ is not used frequently. Sharon builds her reputation through *doing, creating spaces* to be who she is through multiple micro interactions. She is clear about the power of showing and reputation, as she says;

“...and by the time you've been in the job a few years, people don't need to ask because they know either through hearsay or they've had the experience”

When I ask her about maturity and experience in our final session, Sharon draws her thoughts together. She underlines the importance of others for recognition and for the sharing of who she is. Her identity is realised;

“Because ...others have evidence of your capability.”

Brenda: Social mechanisms for the narrative self

Brenda, perhaps more so than all other participants, was conscious of the ways in which the establishment of her professional identity relied on other people, and the successful exploitation of moments in her professional life which could act to structure or expand her self-talk. In our first session, Brenda identified the importance of events for her career;

“I came out of college I thought I was going to work in a school, then all of a sudden the strike happened and these resource centres were set up and I did think it was an important part of, you know, me career [so it was an identification with doing something a bit...different?] Mm hhh.”

When she reviewed her career biographically with me in session one, Brenda defined and connected moments and meetings as *opportunities*;

“...I suppose I kinda 'met' people along the way that gave me opportunities”

This sensitivity to new opportunities related to Brenda's own recognition that her career path had been different, and she had not progressed along traditional (social work or therapeutic) professional routes. Perhaps as a

⁶¹ Direct claims or ascriptions about self.

result, she demonstrated a particular enthusiasm and skill for embracing new things, and “unpicking” situations. When I noted that she liked new things, Brenda agreed: “Hm mm! I do! ..but it was about being allowed to do it”. For Brenda, being *allowed* was evidence of recognition, adding in our first session;

“..when you’ve come back, and you’ve done a good piece of work you actually get recognition for it, and then that makes you feel good about yourself”

However, others involvement in Brenda’s professional project was more than eliciting good feelings about herself. Social activity enabled Brenda to evaluate herself, and through it she could adapt and adjust, so she could be perceived in a certain way. She illustrates this in a quote from our first session;

“...if you’re lucky you get constructive criticism and you know, only then can you make a change to how you’re being perceived”

The idea of being perceived emphasises the sense of reception in real time. This makes sense in the context of her talk about busyness, where she was very aware of tasks in hand and multiple priorities: her self-talk is aware of her emotional state, how she is experiencing things and in turn *being experienced* by others. When we worked with her table top assemblage, we worked with a card titled ‘recognition and acknowledgement’ which she related to a state of self-belief and confidence. She picked it up and responded:

“...‘recognition and acknowledgement’ – really, really important, because it’s about your self-belief and your confidence. If you don’t get your recognition, how are you going to feel valued and was really important to me, and still is, actually”

Awareness of how she was perceived and experienced was clear in our talk about meetings. When Brenda wanted to talk about an frustrations with an internal meeting with peers, we began to focus on small signals she found helpful that she was being recognised, such as a glance or simply by someone saying “...‘oh, yeah I know what you’re saying’...”.

As with Sharon, these were small but vital actions that enabled her to 'be' herself in that situation. When we talked in session three on about establishing herself as a professional in external meetings, Brenda described how, following several awkward starts, she had become established in a multi-agency group, which she attributed to;

"Building up, like a relationship but he knows what I do and I know what he does, we have a shared knowledge of what each others' role is in that meeting, right, so I know what he's doing and he knows what I'm doing because we've said our bits so many times"

Brenda's experience in this multi-agency group demonstrates the way in which the development of the narrative self is something that requires work and must be established with others. This accomplishment happens over time, and is dependant upon creating social spaces for demonstration and recognition. Ultimately, Brenda's experience in the group was that the chair of the meeting to whom she referred to in the quote eventually was able to help promote and explain who she was to the meeting. In effect, she was no longer doing all the explaining and justifying.

With her own team, Brenda was aware of the need for narratives to be used at the right time, and to be significant to others. So, when we talk about sharing her stories with her family support team, Brenda understands that;

"to share a story is about having it in the right context at the right time with the right person, to enable something else to happen"

Just as relevance is the criteria for sharing stories about herself, then Brenda highlights that significance is the criteria for which events are configured into stories. Both things relate to the idea of 'the right time' for stories to be configured or refigured into practice. When we talked about what featured in her stories about herself, Brenda told me;

"Because they're significant, though, haven't they? They have to be a significant thing to turn up as a story and they have got to have some kind of structure, really. It's got to be meaningful, a meaningful experience to you to turn up as a story.....and to turn up as a story, there has to be a relevant time to tell it"

Like other participants, Brenda's narratives show how she took advantage of opportunities to act and talk in new ways: how she was sensitive to 'the right

time'. In our final session, I related this to her ability to be alert to her fast moving professional life;

"You try and do complex, fast moving stuff – that's the pressure. What you're trying to look for is short cuts to everything... it's trying new and innovative ways of what to do yourself."

Brenda's ability to think and act in new ways is a useful context for examining her identity work: I got a clear impression that Brenda's professional project was something that she worked hard to achieve and involved being alert. Brenda's practice-talk consequently includes themes of innovation and connection;

"when you hit something, where there's some similarity in situation and so...you're transferring lots of skills what you've used before"

These sorts of innovating activities connect experiences, and expand understanding of 'problematic' situations that Brenda so liked unpicking. I argue that these sorts of skills are intimately involved with the configuration and refiguration of the narrative self. The theme of innovation is also evidenced in Brenda's desire to "push yourself to be different", illustrated in session three when I asked her about values, and I expected her to say how important it was to be consistent;

"I think they can stop you from, em, pushing your thinking on? ...do you know what I mean? ...you know, stop you from thinking outside the box sort of thing – sometimes can make you feel a bit rigid in your decisions sometimes... [So is it that you have patterns of thinking that sometimes become a bit habitual?] Yeah, yeah. That's it, yeah. Like what you've always done, definitely, and I think sometimes you have to push yourself to be different."

Diane: Social mechanisms for the narrative self

Diane's stories as told to me would not have been possible in other circumstances. As our sessions progressed, Diane became increasingly conscious that, without the tumultuous circumstances of the service re-organisation she found herself in, she would not have asked certain questions or been forced to show, reflect on, or explain certain things. As she said in our fourth session;

“...the whole experience of our service reorganisation has allowed me to tell my story because it’s made me think about who I am, where I stand professionally, what I do”

Diane’s talk of her service reorganisation was characterised by both uncertainty and opposition. Lack of context and reference points seems to trouble Diane most in her narrative, where she noted;

“...so basically we’re in a situation now where you’ve got all these people who are in a team and nobody knows what anybody else does”

Being known, recognised and understood is the way in which Diane’s professional identity is operationalised and sustained; her identity work is therefore reliant on an ecosystem of associations and recognitions, but without these, there is a vacuum for her identity work. Of particular worry for Diane are those others who do not understand her ‘Sure Start’ team, track record and heritage, captured in her use of the term “world”;

“I don’t want to sound awful, but the managers are either from Connexions or health and they have no idea about my world”

Her assessment of the situation is telling: Diane’s claims to be who she is do not simply rely on a relationship between her *own* showing and explaining, as previously discussed, but upon associations with her professional community. These associations have previously reduced uncertainty, where shared knowledge and practices within Sure Start have provided a frame of reference, referred to previously as a “family”. In contrast, when that social framework is dismantled, Diane notes the effect:

“...people don’t trust each other at the minute”

Interestingly, it is not that Diane wants things to be fixed or not to change. She told me clearly that;

“I like my role I think because I do a lot of different things and I can develop things and it changes all the time”

As with Brenda, change and variety is important to the renewal and demonstration of Diane’s professional self. Change, however, is more accurately described as *improvisation* within a framework of recognition.

Diane does not welcome wholesale change and what she sees as chaos, because the performance of her professional self is an improvisation *within* a frame of reference. However, she grudgingly gives some credit to her experience of an organisational vacuum, when she says;

“...the uncertainty of what was happening has allowed me to start thinking!”

In our final session, we talked about one of the cartoon images I provided, which I titled ‘reworking’ to try and capture the sense of realigning herself to changed circumstances;

“it’s almost...there’s the uncertainty and the sense of...it’s change: so every time you change, I’m having to ‘re-work’, I’m having to do different things, I’m having to pull myself round, you’re having to talk to new people”

The idea of having to change was connected strongly to the sense of *opposition*, particularly from health colleagues. Again, Diane sees this in terms of gaining recognition:

“...I think it was mainly within Sure Start the early years wasn’t kind of being recognised as being important, and that was really difficult”

Her sense of frustration is clear in transcripts of sessions with me and her currency seems to be invalidated. The effect of this highlights that others are central to the practice of Diane’s professional self. However, unlike her frustration with a sense of vacuum, Diane’s narratives provide evidence that resistance gives her something to work with, something to ‘show’. Having a definition imposed upon her which in no way relates to her professional project causes her to ask some significant questions, and causes her to be explicit about who she is, so when talking about the imposition of health colleagues in the new organisation, she says;

“I think I need to know who I am, and by telling people who I am I don’t want them.. I need them to know what it is that I do so they don’t just come boolin’ in, like it almost could feel, tellin’ us to do this or do that”

This highlights the status of Diane’s professional identity (as shown and told) as something that is sustained through *social* movement and stimuli, as well as movement within the mimetic spiral as previously discussed. Within limits,

Diane needs change and interaction to sustain her professional project. In this case, her narratives give the impression that she has been provoked into reconfiguring her talk;

“It’s been through our health colleagues, moaning and groaning like they have for them to fight for their corner that’s made us, certainly me...”

When Diane talks about professional interactions in a positive sense, it is possible to identify ways in which her identity work is partly a social achievement. Rather than seeing her professional project as simply an individual effort, or static object, her focus is upon her professional self and actions as resource for others, so she says;

“...when I’m working with people what I know, then they’ll take from me what they need to get”

This idea of being useful, or being a resource, moves beyond description of the narrative professional self as simply presented or performed. Diane’s narrative self is something that needs an opportunity to be *offered*, *recognised* and to be *used* by others, something she captured as she described how she likes to work with others in our first session, saying;

“...‘right this is what I do, what do you do, what we’re going to do together?’”

Far from being an individual achievement, Diane aligns her own project with that of others, and is aware of the forward momentum this gives her;

“I think that the only way for my work to move forward is by working with other people I couldn’t do it just by myself and I wouldn’t want to either, but I don’t know everything...God. So you have to use other people”

Diane, like other participants, is responsive to the constraints and expansions offered by her social context. I have highlighted ways in which she was seen to become more explicit (in showing and telling) in the light of challenge, but I was particularly interested in how she ‘made space’ for herself to be known by others. Early on in our conversations, Diane was clear that she needed to be active;

“I feel as if I have to claim that role, ‘this is what I do’...”

This sense of activity, and agency, was repeated again and again in statements such as;

“...I feel at the minute that we are definitely having to justify what we do”

And;

“...so you’re having to carve out your own role within how that’s going to fit with everybody else”

Throughout her references to work to establish herself, Diane used the metaphor of fitting, as she sought to bring some equilibrium to her professional life. Her narratives emphasise the social establishment and maintenance of her identity, which she summarised in her fourth session with me when she claimed that;

“I am quite adaptable, and I will, I do think I fight for what I believe in and I think that I’ve worked hard...to keep my professional identity”

This effort was focused on supporting others recognition and understanding of her professional world and her identity within that. In our work on her table-top assemblage in session four, I reminded Diane of the example of demonstrating that an OFSTED inspection provided, and offered it as a metaphor or a ‘stage’ for identity work. She had originally explained it like this;

“...a couple of weeks ago we did have an OFSTED meeting and a couple of the health visitors were there and it was absolutely brilliant it went really well, because they then could understand what we have to do as a job. I think they’ve just had this idea that we basically do nice play things with children and do nothing else – they didn’t understand the targets we have to work towards, they didn’t understand OFSTED, they didn’t understand all the hard work we have to put into the SEF and you know, all the outcomes and all the evidence..”

In my sessions with Diane, I began to understand that ‘understanding’ was more than seeing evidence; what was important was the active, on-going reception of Diane’s ‘world’ and Diane herself. In our final session, despite being despondent at the cycle of change starting again, she explained this in terms of an active belief;

“I wanted recognition for the work that I’ve done and for...for being good at what you do. It’s like establishing yourself, isn’t it? ...getting people to...to believe in you! It’s getting other people to recognise that you do what you do, and you do it well.”

General discussion: Social mechanisms for the narrative self

I have presented ways in which participants’ self-talk has developed by being responsive to ‘spaces’ for expansion or challenges of structuring, and the mimetic work of others. I have also highlighted the significance of others’ assessments and judgements, as well as ways in which participants’ “life projects” (1990/1994, p.158) are lived *with* others, with whom individuals’ talking and doing must be fitted. Through a range of individual examples, I have drawn attention to the importance placed by participants on the subject of recognition. In this part of the final theme of my findings and discussion, I shall discuss these themes which I will give the labels ‘adapting through transformation’, ‘defined together’, ‘innovation’ and ‘recognition’, relating each to the theoretical chapter of this thesis.

Adapting and transforming

Much of this study has considered the adaptation and transformation in the context of narrative identity and identity work. Many of the adaptations and transformations discussed and displayed by participants are examples of the various transformations discussed in the theoretical chapter of this thesis. I argue here that participants’ data expands understanding of how transformations and adaptations have been practically achieved. Consequently, I now argue that activity at each stage of mimesis (and within both categories of talk) ‘shape’ a story told shown through the effects of either structuring / limiting or through providing creative opportunities for innovation and adaption.

Within the experiences that prefigure self-talk, practices, as apart from individual actions, are seen by Ricoeur (1983/1990, p.57) are cultural processes that articulate experience. By recognising the articulation of

practices as related, rather than randomly individual actions, Ricoeur draws attention to the transformations participants are part of in everyday life. Seen through time, Ricoeur (1986/2008) also notes that doing is a kind of utterance, where things done are “marks on time” (p.148). In doing so, he draws attention to the necessity of these initial “marks” – seen in participants’ practice-talk. I argue that significant events, transitions and disruptions helped create these ‘marks’ for participants; for Brenda, opportunities to do something new, or Chris’s experience of being given responsibility in the cadets, for example. For all participants, practical activity that was initially seen as disruption could potentially be a creative force, but only as they engaged with the questions it raised for them about the validity of their self-project.

I have already discussed in general terms the transformation that is associated with the act of configuration in the theory chapter of this thesis. Examining participants’ data has helped me to better understand these transformations. Ricoeur (1983/1990) argues that telling stories takes features of the conceptual network of action that is a part of prefiguring practices (goals, motives, agents, acting and suffering and doing with others) and transform them (p.55), adding “discursive features” (p.56) which make them intelligible as a plot and integrating them (1983/1990, p.56, p.65) “into the total action”; giving them a capacity to be *used* (Ibid. p.57). My own configuration work with participants demonstrated this, as they added explanations for the movement of narrative elements as visual artefacts, and parts were related.

This sort of work by participants was a form of *semantic* expansion, where meaning was conferred as connections were made between what Ricoeur calls agents, deeds and sufferings (1983/1990, p.57). However, the sort of connections made resulted in *poetic* expansion and transformation (1983/1990, p.59), endowing practices with ethical qualities. Additionally, transformation and expansion occurred through the adding of fictional elements (1990/1994, p.162); not seen as ‘making stories up’, but illustrated by Sharon’s discussion of ‘tweaking’ stories, for example.

As participants' self-talk was refigured back into practice, further transformations occurred. As participants' self-projects were refigured back into practice, I have shown ways in which they were structured and needed to fit. For example, participants sought explicit or implicit permission or validation from others. Their narratives, as they became part of the social process, submitted themselves to the rules of dialogue, a joint enterprise that involved mutual recognition and could only be built together.

Venema (2000, p.159) argues that the gap created by configuration is closed again when fiction reconnects with life, or stories are tested in practice. Everyday practices were transformed and ordered in the light of plots (1983/1990, p.83) and participants were able to "try out" (1986/2008, p.173) ways of being realised in configuration. In summary, I argue that self is a narrative project that is both shown and told for participants. This project is taken forward as it moves through different stages of mimesis; it is forced to adapt, edit, extend and so on to meet the ontological and epistemological characteristics of those categories. Things 'shown' that require an explanation (prefiguration) are both ordered and expanded in configuration. Similarly, configured stories 'told' about the self must adapt so they remain relevant in the narrative project, which is something undertaken with others.

Innovation

Within participants' "life projects" (1990/1994, p.158) - which involved both showing and telling - adapting, transforming and expanding involved a degree of innovation. I have shown how, for Sharon, a narrative about being creative and having the "wow factor" may not survive changes as she changes roles, which are vital as the site of her pre and refiguration. A change of job might simply remove the ability to talk like that, and her narrative might simply become an 'old story', less and less relevant over time. For Sharon, and all participants, innovation was necessary as their professional project transformed and adapted: enabling self-talk to stay relevant and to accommodate new experiences.

Innovation is a theme that relates to the theoretical chapter in this thesis. Ricoeur (1986/2008) draws attention to the tentative and changeable nature of narrative identity when he argues that human action is an “open work” (p.151) and that human action, like text, has a “specific plurivocity”, so both text and action require deciphering (Ibid. p.156). Participants’ life projects therefore have many potential trajectories and may intersect with other events or texts in multiple ways. He qualifies this by adding that action, like text, is also a limited field of actions (Ibid.). Innovation, therefore, is not simply fictional creation as previously discussed but is a skilled occupation and development of potential spaces.

Through their practice-talk, participants have shown ways in which the showing and telling of their selves is emergent and may be viewed as a map with multiple potential branches. If this metaphor is extended, then I argue that it is possible to move upwards as well as outwards in terms of innovation, as participants achieve ontological innovation, or understanding of what their self-talk is ‘about’. In his discussion of the understanding of a text, Ricoeur (1986/2008) discusses movement from surface to depth understanding, or “what the text is about” (p.166). In my own study, I have shown ways in which participants have shown that their own configuration activity is a form of innovation, as recognisable elements are arranged in new ways. Seeing things *in new ways* is central to the process of narrative identity work: it connects to Ricoeur’s discussion of the ipse and idem self which stresses the need for the innovative ipse self to disrupt the sedimentation of the *Idem* self (Venema, 2000, p.139; Ricoeur 1983/1990, p.68, 1990/1994, p.121).

Metaphorical thinking is presented by Ricoeur (1986/2008) as a distinct form of innovation in his work on narrative identity, where metaphor is viewed as semantic innovation (p.167) or a structuring of what he calls semantic fields (p.169). Here, imagination is a *method*, a way of grasping the similar (ibid, p.169) where the metaphorical image allows for “a free play of possibilities” (Ibid. p.170) and through its heuristic force, has a “capacity to open and unfold new dimensions of reality” (Ibid. p.171). I have extended practical understanding of how participants in this study have achieved this as I have

engaged participants in reflexive conversations. For example, for Sharon's imaginative method relied upon the ability to identify, assess and select and align narrative elements that were in "orbit" around the situation of dialogue. For Brenda, the potential of the new, or the challenge, provided an ideal conceptual and dialogical space within which to innovate, as her narrative resources were drawn upon and used in new ways appropriate to the situation. This sort of work very much practically illustrates Ricoeur's claim that;

"...it is indeed through the anticipatory imagination of acting that I 'try out' different possible courses of action and that I 'play', in the precise sense of the word, with possible practices." (1986/2008, p.173)

Defined together

In discussing the movements and changes involved with showing and telling, I have already begun to emphasise the *social* nature of mimetic activity. I have shown that participants communicate their 'self-project' mainly through showing and associating. There *are* places for self-talk to be deployed, but not normally in day-to-day practice-talk. Participants showed limited value of claiming and stating the self in practice, but instead rely on practices that augment speech⁶². For all of the participants, desire to present the narrative self was not the main aim of professional dialogue. Participants framed professional interactions through the lens of being a leader and the work with children, and all shared the focus of influencing, educating, motivating or informing others. In the light of data from my study, I argue here that participants' identity work not only requires 'the other' but is something that, within limits, is conducted *by* others as well. In making this claim, I extend Ricoeur's discussion of this subject by emphasising the viral and systemic nature of identity work when seen in a social context.

The context for this is Ricoeur's conception of the "life project" (1990/2004, p.158). In this context, life is entangled with others (Ibid. p.161) and Ricoeur is able to discuss the "connectedness of life" (Ibid. p.115). I have shown how,

⁶² Such as Sharon's claim that her introductory title and role is simply "wrapping" for who *she* is.

for participants, 'doing' is important. Within the realm of practical experience, Ricoeur notes that, as in writing, social actions have an inscriptive quality and resonate with others: Ricoeur (1986/2008) talks about how "deeds escape us" (pp.148-149), and draws attention to the idea of reputation to illustrate this. In the context of the "life project" (1990/2004, p.158), where "life plans" relate ideals and practices (p.177), showing is therefore concerned with establishment of an *ethical identity* (Ibid. p.151), where participants identify and relate the parts (practices) with the whole (ideals); this being part of the work of configuration. I have considered Chris's concern about consistency, which is one example of work to establish this ethical identity in my study. Further, I have shown that establishing an ethical identity is also bound up with the practicalities of searching for recognition. For Ricoeur (1990/2004), one central strand of narrative identity is summarised in terms of character, which he says, is composed of "...lasting dispositions by which a person is recognised" (p.121). This recognition is based on intersubjectivity, which Ricoeur grandly suggests provides an "assurance of being oneself acting and suffering" (Ibid. p.22).

All participants' narratives demonstrated an awareness of being perceived, assessed and judged by others. Chris was very aware that his own character was 'being watched' as a leader, and he was aware of the importance of for him and others that his professional project was consistent. Being perceived, assessed and judged are inherently social activities in that they require more than one party and imply some form of communication between them. The temporal emphasis of the mimetic spiral draws attention to the need for narrative identity to be continually enacted. Consequently, the social process of being perceived, assessed, judged and validated by others is repeated with each innovation to ensure repeated mimetic cycles. In other words, for all participants, stories need to stay relevant, and staying relevant requires social validation.

When seen through the lens of Ricoeur's mimetic spiral, the importance of practical experience as the site of prefiguration and refiguration is emphasised. My study has shown that participants sought to exploit this practical field as part of narrative identity work. I have given examples where

participants created and sustained 'sites' of dialogue where their professional self could be shown and told in new ways. In many ways, participants are reliant on others to construct new sites of pre and refiguration. Diane referred to her own experience of this when she claimed;

“...we need to be able to just meet with people and chat about what we're going to do, and how we're going to do things! ...and just how we're going to move things forward, and understand how we're all going to fit together...”

Diane's narrative is in part concerned with building a shared narrative with others. In the practical work of establishing this, dialogue is generally 'about' the same thing, and effort is put into finding points of connection, overlap and shared narrative. Diane emphasises this with her talk of being a “do-er”. Driven by the need to create opportunities for their professional selves to be told and shown in order to be sustained, participants demonstrated great skill in working with others to expand spaces to 'be' themselves. Again, for Diane, this was demonstrated in discussion of her work with health colleagues towards an OFSTED inspection, which I suggested at the time provided such a space, or 'stage' for her.

Recognition

“The road to recognition is long, for the “acting and suffering” human being, that leads to the recognition that he or she is in truth a person “capable” of different accomplishments. What is more, this self-recognition requires, at each step, the help of others...” (Ricoeur, 2005, p.69)

Many of the activities presented and discussed in this section – adapting, innovating, establishing together - are directed towards the achievement of recognition by self and others. Recognition, for all participants, has been presented as a goal *and* an undertaking. In his own work on recognition, Ricoeur (2005) places self-recognition initially in the context of Aristotle's discussion of a “fulfilled” life (p.81) drawing attention to the socially established issue of virtues, and the practical, moral actions of virtue, decisions and wishes made (Ibid. pp.82-85). Whilst participants did not generally use abstract, philosophical language to achieve it, I have shown

that each placed their multiple 'narratives' within the aim of a coherent and directed life.

Practically, Ricoeur (2005) sought to identify mechanisms by which he was able to discuss the idea of recognition and link it to the establishment of narrative identity. Specifically, he identified what he called the "phenomenology of the capable human being" (p.89), drawing attention to the idea of "capacities" (Ibid. p.91). Capacities, for Ricoeur, speak about the person who is able to say, "I can". Specifically, Ricoeur establishes at this point a relationship between the attestation of "I can" and self-recognition, so capacities draw attention to 'who' is speaking. Narrative identity work is therefore a social undertaking, as participants take a social 'detour';

"This detour through the "what" and the "how" before returning to the "who," seems to me explicitly required by the reflexive character of the self, which, in the moment of self-designation, recognizes *itself*."
(Ricoeur, 2005, p.93)

Ricoeur (2005) makes the point that participants, in saying they 'can', *appropriate* actions (p.98), and require dialogue with others to whom they can do this. All of this, for Ricoeur, leads to the issue of *mutual* recognition (Ibid. p.93) – after all, attestations like "I can" occur in dialogue, and respond to, or may themselves be responded to by others (Ibid. p.96). It is the individual who can be *accountable* for their acts (Ibid. p.105) as a kind of "ethical juridical justification" (Ibid. p.134).

Instances of proving, showing, telling, being heard and so on form the cornerstone of participants' identity work. These activities underline the finding of this study that participants' identity work has been shown to be transformative, innovative and social. Most significantly, examination of actual practices of proving, showing, telling, being heard highlights the importance of themes such as consistency. All of the participants, in different ways, practically established narrative identities (shown and told) in the context of a 'practical ethics'. Understanding these practices has involved bringing together Ricoeur's hermeneutic philosophy with constructivist and ethnographic ways of seeing (Holstein & Gubrium, 1999).

This theme, like the three themes before it are therefore a presentation and discussion of findings from my research with participants. In many ways, the first theme provides a context for the following three, and all are connected by themes and concepts such as adaptation, recognition, justification, coherence, sedimentation and mutuality. In the next chapter, I shall draw together these key insights in the context of reviewing the ways I have responded to the questions I originally posed at the beginning of this thesis.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In my final chapter of this thesis, I move beyond the details of participants' narratives discussed in the previous chapter and review the extent to which I have achieved my aims set out at the beginning of this thesis. In doing so I relate various points of reference and review and evaluate the arguments I have presented along with the results of my empirical study. Thus the conclusion presents an integrated and evaluative consideration of what has been discussed so far.

I revisit my title and the questions that have guided it and remind the reader of the context in which these questions have been asked. I shall consider the continued relevance of the questions I have asked to practical and theoretical debates on this subject and also the way the material I have presented both builds on and deviates from these debates. In reviewing how I have answered the questions set out in the first chapter, I will identify what sort of response and insight I have achieved, bearing in mind the developmental and flexible nature of this mainly hermeneutic project. Finally, the conclusion provides a practical point of progression for my future research and hopefully that of others studying related topics or seeking to work in similar ways as I consider the limitations of the thesis and directions in which this topic may be investigated further.

To recap, following the discussion of the way in which I approached this topic in the first chapter of this thesis, I presented the following title for the thesis;

“Accounting for professional identity: relating identity stories and accounts of professional practice in integrated Early Years services”

The aim of the study was to be reflective and practical; a consideration of the *how* of professional narrative identity. The title reflected a question about whether something as ontologically complex and abstract as narrative identity could also be a practical endeavour. Although my starting point for the study that generated this thesis was mine, I inevitably investigated this topic initially through the accounts of others. I now realise that the

formulation of this title reflected Ricoeur's (1990/1994) thesis about understanding "oneself as another".

The title of this thesis located it within the context of integrated early years services. This was because I wished to expand the practical and theoretical understanding of narrative identity in a sector where concepts of leadership, and professional identity, are generally under-theorised. My title hinted that the relationship between identity narratives and professional practices was central to my study. This was reflected in the development of two overarching questions for the study, which were used to explain the focus of the study to others in general conversation. These were;

- *"How do experiences turn into identity stories?"*; and,
- *"How do identity stories shape on-going practice?"*

These questions reflected my position on the subject; that these two things *were* related. This starting point was consistent with it being a hermeneutic study, as described in the first chapter. My questions have in turn been related to Ricoeur's (1983/1990) material on the narrative self, which connects experience and narrative through mimesis₁, mimesis₂ and mimesis₃, discussed in the theoretical framework chapter of this thesis.

This thesis has therefore has been a *practical*, as well as philosophical and hermeneutic undertaking. Following my early pragmatic, sociological and ethnomethodological inspiration, I wished to understand how narrative and practices related in early years professional identity work. I therefore set out the following research questions in the first chapter, each of which I explain in turn:

What does 'professional identity' mean to these participants; what status and forms does it take?

I asked this question because, in my experience, I was not aware of widespread everyday use of the term professional identity in integrated early years settings. I believed that something *like* identity must be important, as my experience of working collaboratively required an articulation of 'who people were' and, over time, some negotiation about this. I was aware that

literature on integrated working in the early years highlighted issues of identity negotiation and difficulties (Anning, Cottrell et al., 2006; Rodd, 2013), but I was not satisfied with the superficial treatment of this as I perceived it.

(How) has narrative identity developed over time for these participants?

In the first chapter, I explained that, over time, I realised that how I saw and talked about myself 'as a professional' had changed. Part of this insight was about understanding professional biographies, but I was also interested in exploring if other individuals had similar understandings about possible changes in their professional selves over time.

If narrative identity is positioned as a project undertaken by participants, what is the relationship between doing and talking in that project?

Here, I aimed to be concrete and specific as possible. I used the term 'professional project' to reflect the idea of development over time and that, in my experience, individuals had generally sought to be a 'self' which was more or less consistent with the past and in the present. I rejected an alternative reading of the term 'project' which implies a foundational professional self, fixed in advance. Within the former definition, I identify personal change in two ways. Firstly, one can identify change as beginning with my doing things differently, but secondly, it can be tied to new ways of talking, of how I presented myself and acted with others. Therefore, I saw both doing and talking as significant. Whilst I had identified some sort of reciprocal relationship between the two in my experience, I wanted to see if that was the case for participants in my study and if so, how it could be understood generally.

Are there identifiable functions, processes or mechanisms that affect the enactment of narrative identity in this study?

In reflecting upon my story and the ways of working I had developed, I wanted to go beyond abstract and metaphorical ideas about doing and speaking the self which romanticised or idealised professional identity. This

question reflected my focus on the practical work that related narrative identity to practices. In understanding others' accounts of identity work, I was interested in the functions, processes and mechanisms of meaning making and whether I could identify these with participants in my study.

In my second chapter I built upon this personal experience as I considered literature about the context, experience and skills of the early years leader⁶³. I emphasised the relative lack of clarity regarding terms including 'leadership' and 'career', and then demonstrated that this same context is contested, ambiguous, complex and dynamic; factors that further confuse the activity of identity formation for leaders. Within literature I have discussed, I identified arguments (Dahlberg, Moss et al, 2013; Osgood, 2006) that those working with young children and their families are subject to what I have identified as a technical and administrative culture, where the 'work' of individuals was quantified and assessed, but not always understood; certainly not in ontological terms.

Consequently, I realised that the professional identity of leaders was marginal to and under-explored within early years leadership literature. Nevertheless, I have built upon the limited insights that exist. Firstly, I respond to the recognition by Mujis, Aubrey et al (2004) and others that little is known about leadership in this sector. Specifically, my research has opened up a narrative exploration of leaders *themselves*, in a sector that is dominated by policy discourse or the practical aspects of pedagogy. I have deviated from discussions of professional identity for leaders of early years services by utilising a theoretical lens and associated methodology that utilises and applies the work of Paul Ricoeur in new ways. The only other substantial treatment of practice in this sector using Ricoeur at the time of writing is that by Farquhar (2010), whose questions differ from mine and who does not discuss an English context. Additionally, by utilising this theoretical frame and methodology my research has generated *detailed* insights into narrative identity work undertaken by four individuals. This type of consideration has not to date been undertaken in this way in this sector and

⁶³ e.g. see Chapter 2, p.42

is offered as a modest but important opening in this direction. Presentation of key insights in this chapter highlights how I have made an original contribution to knowledge in this area.

Through my focus on the achievement and deployment of narrative selfhood I have confirmed that *successful* professional identity in the Sure Start context requires more than a professional designation (Department for Education and Skills, 2005b). Additionally, I have built on McGillivray's (2008) work that identifies influences upon professional identity in the sector such as a rapidly changing context on one hand, and day to day practices on the other. Here, I have shown the importance of examining how individuals *work with* such potential influences to be a fruitful line of enquiry. Beyond this, I have explored the significance of an *ethical* dimension to professional identity, building on discussion elsewhere about the importance of the ethic of care within the sector (Lloyd & Hallett, cited in Rodd, 2013, p.5).

My thesis is presented in opposition to what at the time of writing is an impoverished vision of early years leadership offered by the UK Government, where Sure Start Children's Centres are buried underneath a discourse of formal schooling and attainment, where leaders are understood in the largely irrelevant terminology of being an *excellent head teacher*, as described by the Department for Education's executive agency, the National College for Teaching and Leadership. Further, as the National Standards for Leaders of Sure Start Children's Centres (National College for School Leadership, 2007) are now seen as dated and are seemingly left to gather dust, this thesis aims to follow in the critical or pedagogical traditions of authors such as Dahlberg (see Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Dahlberg, Moss et al., 2013), Farquhar (2010) and Osgood (2010, 2012; 2006) in understanding the richness and potential of the early years sector in ethical, philosophical and critical terms.

These general features of my thesis, which identify it as a development of, and deviation from, existing literature are reflected in the details of key insights generated by the findings and discussion of my research, which I shall now discuss, drawing upon the four broad themes presented in the previous chapter.

Insight 1: Narrative resources are related, used and transformed in the development of the narrative self.

My first key insight from this study is that narrative identity is established over time, as the 'showing' and 'telling' self are related through sustained cycles, reflected in Ricoeur's (1983/1990; 1990/1994) prefiguration (mimesis₁), configuration (mimesis₂) and refiguration (mimesis₃). Here, *narrative resources are related, used and transformed in the development of the narrative self*. This developmental perspective has highlighted significant conditions for the maintenance of a successful professional narrative identity for participants. Specifically, I have shown how participants' narrative selves must be consistent with their 'track record' (identifiable and historical aspects of their *idem* identity), and that participants must present a narrative identity that they are qualified, and therefore able, to say. I have given multiple examples of the need for showing and telling the self to mutually reinforce one another and have shown how the movement of narrative identity, through the cycles of mimesis₁, mimesis₂ and mimesis₃ is driven by the need for adaptation to circumstances. Within this analysis, I have used findings from my research to highlight ways in which participants recognise, judge, select and adapt narrative resources in their configuration of narrative identity.

This insight is particularly relevant to the professional identity of Sure Start Children's Centre leaders, who I have previously identified as operating within an ambiguous, contested, dynamic and complex environment, and whose narrative identity development requires a suitably complex understanding.

Insight 2: There are unique patterns of connections between narratives that support and constrain possible narrative selves.

My second key insight draws upon the second theme of the previous chapter, which is that connections within narratives explain participants' abilities to be able to make particular claims. These *unique patterns of*

connections between narratives support and constrain participants' possible narrative selves. Specifically, I have discussed example of *pivotal* narratives, which when represented visually in self-talk and self-practice talk maps provide new ways of understanding narrative identity. In addition to the *content* of narrative identity (self-talk), I have shown that sets of connections point to the *functions* of narratives for participants, such as explaining or justifying appearance or containing chaos. I have discussed how connective (configurational) is one response to disruptive circumstances (e.g. Diane and the need to demonstrate continuing relevance) and can also be required as an alternative, positive, narrative (e.g. Brenda's 'embracing opportunity' narratives as opposed to experience of waiting and reliance on others). In short, I have shown through participants' narratives that *who I am* and *what I do* are linked in complex ways. Further, I have demonstrated that understanding unique patterns of coherence and connection is of significance to a study of narrative identity.

This insight is of particular relevance for Sure Start Children's Centre leaders, because it provides a way of appreciating individuals' identity in terms of constraints and development. In the absence of a single stable professional or career framework for continuous professional development (CPD) for these leaders, considering these 'patterns of connections' opens an area of inquiry for the planning and delivery of CPD for them.

Insight 3: Participants display an ecosystem of narratives that frame, maintain, defend, show, justify and separate

My third key insight is that participants narratives existed as an *ecosystem of different types of talk*, which may be seen in terms of fluid layers, with relatively stable self-talk on the top. This builds on the previous structural insight into narrative identity and shows that narrative identity requires narratives that frame, maintain, defend, show, justify and separate. For all participants, self-talk, which claims and ascribes, forms a relatively small part of the professional project. Instead, following Goffman's (1959/1990) analysis, participants' 'back room' narratives used with select audiences

provide an opportunity to reflect upon and question the narrative self. Further, participants' practice-talk has the effect of communicating important implicit messages about the narrative self, and is often better able to integrate evidence from others, as seen in Chris's use of anecdotes and quotes from others about himself. For all participants, a positive, well established narrative identity is sustained and defended by other forms of talk: Sharon's table top assemblage has a 'dodgy corner', and she also sustains her narrative self through enabling forms of self-talk. Brenda has narratives that address potential gaps and dislocations. On top of these, to differing degrees, participants' configure 'big stories' that are relatively stable and mature. These frame other narratives and set limits for adaptation and improvisation *within their boundaries* – so Sharon is creative, Chris is fair, Brenda is adaptive and resilient, and Diane gets things done with others, and their narratives are consistent with these big stories. Generally, these big stories provide an ontological base for participants' narrative selves, but it is the wider ecosystem of narratives that enable them to adapt and be sustained.

This has broad relevance for leaders of Sure Start Children's Centres, who may benefit from consideration of opportunities and resources for developing types of professional talk. Specifically, the thesis offers conceptual and methodological resources that can be applied to the development of Sure Start Children's Centres leaders' CPD, supervision and appraisal.

Insight 4: Narrative identity is constructed with, and in relation to, others: affordances, recognition and reputation are key.

My research has demonstrated that the narrative self-project is a *social* project, where 'being oneself' depends upon mutually constructed spaces for doing and saying. Narrative identity responds to these spaces, which I relate to Heidegger's (1927/2010) discussion of "affordances"; expanding or adjusting in response to opportunities or demands of the life-world (Husserl, 1954/1970). I have illustrated the demands placed upon narrative identity to adapt as it is deployed in the professional world (in mimesis₃, refiguration)

and as it aims to be recognised as relevant and valid by others. Ricoeur (2005) discusses the ability to claim to be, and to do in his phrase “I can” (p.91) – where the idea of *capacities* is both descriptive of the self and indicates the reliance on others for recognition. Elsewhere, my research has shown how narrative identity can develop in response to unexpected opportunities; so Sharon is conscious that her title and introduction is “just the wrapper”, and how she establishes herself is subject to improvisation and response. Narrative identity, then, responds to context – Diane is able to talk about herself in a certain way because her professional world is turned upside down and this raises questions and dilemmas, whereas Brenda is ‘given’ opportunity and permission to be, by others. Over time, this pattern of presentation and response, of improvisation, is sedimented in the concept of *reputation*. Reputation is then the social currency of narrative identity for individuals, but also a form of *mimetic activity conducted by others*. In this sense, Diane knows people will “take from me” what they need; people see the influence of Sharon in those she has advised, and Chris relies on positive talk *about* him from his team to establish his identity. I argue that what is seen here, through the relating of narrative identity and *others* (i.e. they work they can do and the resource they represent) is a form of relational agency (Edwards, 2009) which identifies identity as something women (and men) do, and not something simply passively given to them. As such, the *social* establishment of identity, emphasising features such as agency and co-operation reflects the principles of feminist scholarship on identity summarised in chapter two.

This again is broadly relevant to leaders of Sure Start Children’s Centres, who, whilst benefiting from a focus in the sector on adult-child pedagogic relationships, have more work to do in understanding adult-adult professional identity and relationships. Specifically, following programmes such as the NPQICL and research by Daniels et al (2008), this thesis opens up a new line of inquiry regarding the vital subject of adult-adult leadership identity and relationships through concepts such as capacities, affordances and joint improvisation discussed here.

Taken together, these insights present a clear image of the formation and activities of narrative identity for these early years leaders. I have discussed their unique (complex, ambiguous, changing, contested) context where the absence of a single professional framework or clear career structure which emphasises the need for dextrous identity ‘work’ on the part of leaders. For them, narrative identity is a dynamic, social activity that relates talk and action ‘about’ the self, where others have a central role in receiving, recognising and responding to leaders’ narrative selves. Narrative, then, is a *poetic* response, in Aristotle’s use of the phrase as *making*. This response is to leaders’ professional life-worlds (Husserl, 1954/1970; Heidegger, 1927/2010), and their place in those life-worlds as a project in time. Further, the poetic *making* of narrative identity is determined by leaders’ potential narrative resources and ability to say what they “can” be or do.

If talk about poetics and mimesis seems disconnected from the world of a Sure Start Children’s Centre leader, it is because these leaders are too often seen as instrumental subjects of a childcare and early education system. Clearly, participants discussed in this thesis do undertake sense-making work, which over time configures a sense of identity. The results of this work, as for participants in this study, are seen looking back, often when there is a need to explain, change or decide.

Responding to research questions

Having discussed the relevance of this thesis, explained the research questions that guided by research and described key insights generated from that research, I now return to my research questions to consider how this thesis has informed them. This is done for each question in turn:

What does ‘professional identity’ mean to these participants; what status and forms does it take?

Participants in my study did not speak of a singular, or simple ‘professional identity’. Given my focus on narrative identity, I identified an emphasis on *demonstration* of self, with any reference to ‘who they were’ given in the

context of explanation or illustration of action. Where aspects of narrative identity were deployed in everyday practice, this was in the form of the identifying and role (idem) aspects of identity, for example in introductions. Relatively mature and stable self-talk, emphasising ontological explanation and meaning, was reserved for more intimate relationships, or the safe space of research conversations in this study.

Questions about “professional identity” then, were problematic for participants in this study, which focused initially on more productive lines of enquiry about how participants acted with others, how they explained and introduced themselves, addressing their practical focus and expertise. Whilst participants identified with me some ‘big stories’ about their professional selves, much of their talk demonstrated or implied identity in different ways. In short, participants had multiple stories and ways of understanding and presenting themselves. Sharon and Diane had a clearer idea of what their ‘story’ was in comparison to Brenda and Chris, but all were able to configure some big stories. For all participants, narrative identity can be conceptualised as a patterning of relating and sense-making practices.

(How) has narrative identity developed over time for these participants?

As I undertook my research I found it challenging to give a simple answer to this question. This is partly because the question presupposes an objective perspective upon individual narrative identity. I have identified in this thesis that narrative identity is dynamic, but also that change over time is not a simple additive process. To begin with, I have discussed professional biography with each participant, and have been able to chart in different ways the importance of key events and transitions in shaping identity narratives. Beyond that, through interpretation of my research data, I have identified the development of relatively stable, mature identity narratives within a broader patterning of narrative activity. For example, Chris configures a narrative about him ‘being fair’ which when subject to the conventions of a plot, is a characteristic which is elaborated and demonstrated over time, so is presented as something becoming more

established. All consideration of narrative development, then, is reconfigured by a particular individual at a particular time and place. In summary, rather than seeing narrative identity as a single 'entity', my study has represented participants' narratives as a dynamic field of potentials that are configured and deployed at particular points. The form of narrative identity is therefore shaped and constrained by both *available narrative resources* and *practical affordances* offered to participants in relating to others.

Participants demonstrated the *necessity* of their taking this lead in developing their professional identities through becoming skilful in making sense of patterns of activity over time, and identification of resources and affordances. They have to make their own professional 'worlds', working skilfully with the resources and opportunities open to them. This activity responds to the lack of a single, coherent professional identity offered in the sector I identified in the literature review chapter.

If narrative identity is positioned as a project undertaken by participants, what is the relationship between doing and talking in that project?

I have positioned narrative identity as a project (of sorts) undertaken by participants (Husserl, 1954/1970; Heidegger, 1927/2010), and have identified the forms it takes and the general ways in which it develops. As I have reported, one key feature of narrative identity work is the dynamic relating of doing⁶⁴ and talking⁶⁵ in the professional project. Narrative identity, therefore, is a poetic response to experience, and any apparently fixed identity narrative responds to, and is directed back towards, experience with others. In this context, I have discussed how talking about self (directly or indirectly) is often an *explanation* of experience, and showing self is often an *illustration* of identity claims. As participants' self-practice talk maps illustrated, within those broad categories, there are many different *types* of talk with different *functions*. Talk may connect gaps (e.g. Brenda's talk about waiting, and seizing opportunity), offer evidence (e.g. Chris quoting others who say he is

⁶⁴ Identified in Figure 27 as mimesis1 (prefiguration) and mimesis3 (refiguration).

⁶⁵ Identified in Figure 27 as mimesis2 (configuration).

fair), or signal defensively (e.g. Sharon's talk about choosing and noticing). Conversely, doing may demonstrate (e.g. Diane needing to show her competence in the new service), authenticate (e.g. Sharon needs to be creative in order to claim she is) and is a form of practical sense-making; prefiguring narratives about the self.

Are there identifiable functions, processes or mechanisms that affect the enactment of narrative identity in this study?

My response to this question draws upon the responses to the previous questions. In a general sense, I have discussed how participants' narratives may be conceptualised as products of the mimetic spiral discussed by Ricoeur (1983/1990; 1990/1994), where the movement through practical, prefiguring ways of being (mimesis₁); configuration of narratives (mimesis₂) and refiguration into experience (mimesis₃) in time forces the development and adaptation of identity narratives. In this spiral, talking and doing are related as discussed above. Within this general process, participants in my study discussed specific activities that related to configuring identity narratives. Specifically, participants discussed the identification, and assessment of potential narrative resources – Sharon talked about recognising and selecting resources as she drew this in diagrammatic form (Figure 28), and Brenda discussed experience in material terms, using what was appropriate to the situation. All of these individual actions ultimately contributed to participants' ability to attest to their *capability* – the “I can” of Ricoeur (2005) which identifies the speaker in, and connects them to, the world. This connection, which Ricoeur (2005) discusses in terms of mutual recognition of self and other, is the fundamental social and ethical mechanism which narrative identity operates through.

Theoretical and practical implications

Whilst this thesis has focused on a small number of early years leaders, it has been ambitious in its scope. Nevertheless, it is an exploratory study that presents ways in which theory and practice may be developed around this

topic and the methodology used. In successfully adapting aspects of Ricoeur's narrative hermeneutics and applying them to a topic traditionally viewed in sociological and ethnomethodological terms, I open up a new way of looking at professional identity and practice. I also demonstrate the potential of philosophical ideas such as those relating to poetics, metaphor and recognition to professional practice, and have developed *new questions* and *new ways of seeing* in the process. This represents an advancing of a set of Ricoeur's ideas in distinct ways. Firstly, I have adapted Ricoeur's model of mimesis which originally related life-worlds (Mimesis₁), texts (Mimesis₂) and the readers of texts (Mimesis₃) to consider the re-appropriation of mimesis₃ not only to 'the reader' but also the individual whose lifeworld is the subject of mimesis₁. This focuses attention on the ongoing adaptive work of narrative identity as a life-project for individuals, whereas Ricoeur's original model emphasised the re-appropriation of texts by others. Secondly, in relating Ricoeur's concepts to sociological and ethnomethodological questions of practices, I have made conceptual and epistemological connections nearly unheard of in the study of professional practice in the early years. Thirdly, I have *operationalised* a set of Ricoeur's ideas which until now have been used outside of social science and the study of professional identity, as discussed in chapter four.

These advances emphasise connections between practical action and meaning making. This is highly applicable to Sure Start Children's Centres and the early years sector generally, where research and academic literature needs to reflect the richness of practices and thought in the sector. Indeed, I identify my theoretical development within this thesis to be a response to the under-theorised nature of the early years, which may be mis-represented as technical practice or 'simple' care work⁶⁶ (Ball, 2003; Dahlberg, Moss et al., 2013; Osgood, 2006).

By approaching the practices of early years leaders *through* a consideration of narrative identity (and vice versa), I have developed ways of reconceptualising and interrogating *both*. This is seen in the way the thesis

⁶⁶ See discussion in chapter two, e.g. p.26

has connected individual actions to longer term projects (Ricoeur, 1960/1987, p.71; 1990/1994, p.158) and consequently provided a richer frame of reference for understanding why leaders do what they do. Similarly, seeing leadership activity in Sure Start Children's Centres *through* the lens of narrative identity has shown that effective leadership is more than simply attending to the 'task in hand', but is also about *being* a leader. Definitions of effective and competent leadership in the early years⁶⁷ are therefore expanded through this thesis to include the mimetic work involved with successfully refiguring the narrative self at each moment. This expansion incorporates the skills, rules and goals associated with showing, explaining and demonstrating the self integral to being a Children's Centre leader identified in this study. In the light of this, the National Standards for Leaders of Sure Start Children's Centres (National College for School Leadership, 2007) look even more out of date, and the benefit of connecting studies of professional practices with identity work is identified.

There are a number of methodological innovations discussed in this thesis. These are supported by the close integration I have established between the theoretical framework, the methodology, and the methods created for this study. Specifically, I have 'operationalised' relatively abstract philosophical concepts such as mimesis, or Ricoeur's (1986/2008) idea of 'marks' in human action in maps (Appendices 10.1-11.4) and other visual artefacts (Appendices 5.1-10.4). Combined with a participatory approach, these tools have supported an active, heuristic engagement with questions, emphasising reflexivity and transparency. Therefore, in the same way that I have re-purposed philosophical resources in this study, I have contributed to the growing exploration of alternative ways of representing and mapping beginning to be seen in the social sciences as discussed by McKinnon (2011).

Finally, there are a set of general implications for the future study and development of Sure Start Children's Centres, in whatever form they continue to exist in England. This study is offered as evidence that new

⁶⁷ See discussion in Chapter 2 which begins on p. 34.

forms of professional practice and leadership developed ‘in practice’ by Children’s Centre leaders are valid and *necessary* in the wider dynamic and ambiguous context of children’s services. This should be seen as one of the legacies of Sure Start and not lost. Indeed, this form of leadership is offered in contrast to the dominant educational leadership paradigm offered at the time of writing from the Department for Education and its outgoing executive agency responsible for Children’s Centre leadership, the National College for Teaching and Learning. A practical imperative therefore exists to reconceptualise leadership practices as mimetic activity and to identify and support the skills involved in such activity. Doing this may well help support the development of the adaptive, ethical and generally skilled leadership demonstrated by participants in this study in the wider early years workforce.

Limitations

This thesis has limitations that qualify the previous discussion of key insights and the responses to the questions I set out in the first chapter. Firstly, whilst I have discussed the benefits of being located at an intersection of hermeneutics and sociology, this study is also limited in some ways *because* of that location. Both scholars of Ricoeur *and* those concerned with practical examination of professional talk and action, such as ethnomethodologists, may look for the traditional disciplinary treatment and rigour associated with their discipline and may be dissatisfied. My defence is to state that the thesis is presented in exploratory and pragmatic terms and is aimed at opening up new ways of seeing. The thesis is not a purely philosophical discussion conducted for Ricoeurian scholars; neither is it a detailed empirical study of use of language in context. In my efforts to adapt Ricoeur’s narrative hermeneutics, and to approach issues of professional practices in new ways I do not present a ‘watertight’ case for either. The thesis will have limitations, therefore, if one wishes to read it *solely* from a philosophical or practical position: but this is not its purpose.

One of the consequences associated with crossing disciplinary boundaries is in the use and translation of terminologies, or genres, associated with each.

Whilst a glossary of terms is provided following this thesis and I have sought to be unambiguous and clear in my use of particular words, I am aware of the conceptual challenges involved in moving from, for example, discussion of a metaphorical “narrative field” to more concrete talk about tangible social practices. Whilst I have invested specific terms such as “self-talk” to refer to particular things, I do appreciate that elsewhere I use the phrase “talk” in a more general sense. My view is that this is unavoidable in a thesis about narrative identity. The thesis is written to minimise any contradiction or inconsistency in movement between types of language or uses of particular terms, but some minor shortcomings or ambiguities may be inferred for the sake of innovation.

In relation to the self-talk and self-practice talk maps, there are limitations in the extent to which these may be used beyond their intended use as a heuristic tool. Whilst the generation of codes, and identification of relationships between codes was undertaken systematically, I do not offer the maps as a *forensic* tool with which to interrogate participant narratives and as such their use in that direction is limited. The heuristic and interpretive processes associated with their development and use as artefacts has been discussed in the methodology chapter. Additionally, any process of coding data to create nodes and categories, as I have done, involves a degree of interpretation as to whether particular passages constitute as members of a code, or have a particular relationship to other codes. Consequently, the maps and interpretive work that drew on coding activity represent *one* (albeit careful and validated) *reading* of the data, and as such are one interpretation.

Finally, this thesis, and the research it is based upon is offered as an ‘opening’ up of one new direction in the study of narrative identity and practice. It offers a perspective, or lens through which to conduct an interpretive and hermeneutic study. In its current state, without further research and development, it is limited in the extent to which it can be applied to professional practice. That is something I look forward to doing.

Future research

One benefit of this sort of introductory, but detailed, study is that many potential ‘avenues’ are opened up – topically, theoretically and methodologically. Future research on all of these fronts will be influenced by the practical focus of this thesis, which has been the practical establishment, maintenance and deployment of the narrative self. Firstly, I am motivated to continue to develop practical and visual tools that can support practitioners to reflect upon and plan aspects of their professional lives⁶⁸. There is potential here to consider how individuals could use adapted versions of these tools more independently, and to think about ways of translating approaches and insights from this study into the early years sector and beyond.

Theoretically, I wish to continue to explore the connections that can be made between social theory / philosophy and topics of professional interest in the early years, children’s services and beyond. Many of the themes introduced in this thesis – such as mimesis, metaphor and poetry - represent a rich resource for this activity. Scope also exists to explore the social dimension of narrative identity work, as highlighted by my four key insights in this chapter. Just as, in this study, individuals have begun to interact with images and maps, there is potential to map wider fields of activities within collaborative teams, organisations or partnerships. Visualising this activity may highlight new sorts of connective practices, for example. Finally, I look forward to developing a series of academic publications following this thesis, beginning with my article (Robson, 2013) that has explored narrative strategies employed by individuals in this study.

The study that informed this thesis involved me working with a range of real and virtual partners as I have explored research questions. This has included working with participants in this study, to whom I am grateful, my supervisory team who have been supportive and rigorous and a host of on-line partners via social media. In addition, I count Ricoeur to be an important partner, as I

⁶⁸ See section in Chapter 4 on visual artefacts, which begins on page 136.

have begun to understand his rich published resource for this thesis and beyond.

The process of undertaking the research discussed in this thesis, and of writing the thesis, has been immensely rewarding, and has been one that has shaped me as a person. Ultimately, undertaking this study has not only developed academic insights, but has been an important part of the configuration of my story, and for that I am thankful.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Information sheet for potential participants

Information for participants and their organisations on PhD research conducted by Ian Robson on the topic of 'professional identity'.

Note: Please read this information before supplying consent if you have been approached to participate in this study.

If any part of this information is unclear, or if you have additional questions that are not answered in this information paper, please do contact me by telephone on [telephone number supplied] or by email at: [email address supplied]

Thank you for your consideration.

What is the study about?

I am interested in how people talk about their professional identity – what it is and how it changes. Specifically, I am interested in how individuals working in complicated, multi-disciplinary children's services (like yours) 'make sense' of who they are by relating to the professional environment around them. I am proposing that we don't just think up our professional identity out of thin air – but we build it in all sorts of interesting ways, using our perceptions of the world around us. What I want to find out more about it how you do this, by talking together and reflecting on where you work.

It is a narrative study – so I am interested in your stories and accounts of who you are at work. These 'narratives' can come in any form you feel comfortable with, but I expect they will mainly be spoken. Other sorts of narratives I may ask if you would like to produce could include written (e.g. journal) or visual (simple 'cultural maps' of your workplace, or model making if you would like). No special knowledge or skills are required: you just have to be yourself and there is no right or wrong answer!

I have a formal research proposal you are very welcome to see, which (as you might expect) contains a working title and questions. Here is the working title and some of the key questions in (fairly) everyday language:

"Accounting for professional identity:

Individuals' narratives of self and sense making in children's services"

I will support you to think and talk about things like:

- How you describe your professional identity
- How you describe your work environment
- How do you act and interact with others at work?
- What influences your professional identity and why?
- If these 'influences' are like tools or building blocks, how do you use them to build your professional identity?

The great thing about a narrative study is that it is a journey of discovery. I don't start with a 'hypothesis' (a suggestion about how things work which I look to prove or disprove) but together, we look for things that interest us – things that seem important, puzzling or confusing. The 'picture' builds up over time.

Why I have been asked?

You have been asked because I have said that my research will specifically talk with ex NPQICL participants. The nature of your role and professional context put you in a place to discuss questions I have in the study.

How will the research be conducted?

Firstly, I will ask you to consider this information about the study. If you are interested in participating, you may consider supplying a copy of this paper (enclosed) to your line manager or service co-ordinator if you feel they might wish to be reassured about issues related to anonymity and confidentiality arising from your participation in this study. I will need a completed and signed copy of your consent form if you wish to participate.

After that, I will contact you to arrange an initial meeting to have a conversation about the research: the sort of initial questions I would like to ask you and ideas I have to help you think and reflect over the course of our conversations. We will also discuss practical arrangements, such as where and when it is convenient for us to meet and so on. If you wish to meet in work time or in your workplace, you may feel it is especially important to share this information sheet with your line or service manager. I won't start asking questions related to the study proper until you are clear and happy to move on.

I anticipate us arranging around five interview sessions over a period of twelve months – it may be over a slightly longer time period to fit in with our other appointments. Each session will last between one and two hours, to be negotiated between us. I also will ask if there are any reasonable adjustments I can make to how the research will be conducted if you consider you have a disability.

I will record the audio of these sessions and take photographs of any visual materials (such as sketches) that we produce in the course of discussions.

I will come to the sessions with some initial conversation starters related to the study. However, specific questions are not decided at the start of our work together because they will develop in response to ideas and themes that emerge out of previous conversations. You may also come with things you wish to say as a result of reflections in between sessions, but there is no pressure for you to do this.

During and after sessions I will summarise ideas, questions or ‘themes’ that emerge from your talk. As part of this, I will introduce you to visual methods I have designed to help us reflect on the research questions and your response to them. I have will do this because having a visual record of some sort helps us remember things we have said and ‘step back’ to make sense of what can be complicated issues and ideas! You may or may not wish to use these.

As sessions progress, I will present back to you my interpretation of what you have previously said. This is what researchers call ‘verification’ – in this case, checking I have understood you correctly. This will be your opportunity to correct any mistakes I may have made in understanding your story and for you to see ‘your narrative’ build up over time. You can also have written summaries of sessions we hold on request.

How will the research be disseminated?

In a year or two, the research will be written about in my PhD thesis. Once approved, it will be a public document that anyone can read. I also aim to publish several articles in ‘peer reviewed’ academic journals that discuss different aspects of the study and its findings. These will be available for individuals and organisations who have subscribed to those journals as students or academics. In addition, there may be more informal ‘discussion’ articles or presentations at conferences of the material.

Are there any benefits for me?

Because this sort of research is a journey we go on together, there is one sense in which we don’t yet know what the end results will be. However, I expect there will be both outcomes for you personally and the research generally:

- You will have the opportunity to benefit from professional self-reflection.

- You will gain an insight into qualitative, narrative research methods as both 'subject' of the research and 'participant' in the early stages of making sense of findings.
- You will see your own contributions (and others) as they feature in my PhD thesis and other publications

Specific ethical considerations.

What if I am upset or distressed as a result of talking about the research questions?

You will be asked to reflect on issues around how you see yourself as a professional, how you interact with others, the meaning of 'significant things' in your work environment and so on. It is possible that talking and thinking about these may at times be challenging or uncomfortable. However, these are NOT therapy sessions, and you can choose how and what you would like to talk about within the fairly broad questions I will bring to sessions.

If you feel or I see you are becoming upset, tired or affected in a negative way in a session, I would like to agree that either one of us has permission to 'pause' the session to let you gather your thoughts and think about either having a break, changing the subject or postponing the session. I would like the sessions to be a positive, affirming and safe time for you and will keep this as a priority. I am not interested in asking purposefully 'difficult' or upsetting questions!

As part of setting up the research process, I will highlight support available to you in the unlikely event that you experience distress or negative effect from participating in this study. In the first place, this will be your existing line management and professional supervision channels. In addition, I will highlight a range of external sources of support that you can choose to access should you feel you need to. If I think that your participation does cause distress or negative effect at any time, I will check with you whether you feel you need to access these sources of line management, professional or external support. Because my research is supervised by Northumbria University, I would make a note of any such conversation in my own confidential notes (which you can see) and may discuss the incident with my principal supervisor – to check you are being offered the best support from me at all times.

In the very unlikely event that I think that you intend or are likely to cause, or allow to be caused, serious harm to yourself or other individuals or organisations I will check my concerns with you if appropriate, given the context and circumstance. If I remain concerned I will contact the relevant authorities, usually after informing you (again, if appropriate, given the context and circumstances). In addition, because my research is supervised by Northumbria University, I would report this to my principal supervisor.

How will I and others be represented in publications?

I take seriously the need to respect you, others in your work environment and your organisation generally in conducting this study. This will apply to how I will represent your 'story' in written publication. All data will be anonymised, which means that it will have names of people and organisations removed. It may still be possible (in a small number of circumstances) for specific individuals who know you or your setting well to guess which organisations, settings or individuals are represented even though no details or names are included. Complete confidentiality is hard to promise, but in addition to anonymity, identifiable information which could be used to make the identity of individuals, places or organisations obvious will be omitted.

The type of study and theoretical approach I intend to use in 'making sense' of your and other people's stories does not involve me claiming what I write is 'the truth'. I will be very clear that this is a study of people's narratives – things that can change and have different meanings.

In undertaking analysis of material provided by you and other people involved in the study, I will not 'mix stories up' or edit material to consciously misrepresent you, other people or organisations.

Information you provide to me will be 're-presented' back to you at each session to check it reflects what you intended to say. This will also help ensure that the stories I analyse later on in the research process are as 'truthful' as they can be in terms of your perspective.

Who do I contact if I want to ask more questions about the study?

You can contact me at any point in the study to ask questions, request changes to arranged sessions and so on. You can also express concern about any aspect of your involvement of the study and will be given full responses to any questions you may have.

[contact details supplied]

Who is supervising this study?

If you ever feel there are issues or concerns you cannot satisfactorily resolve by talking to me, I am very happy for you to contact my academic supervisor for this PhD study. This person is ready to listen to you and discuss these. Their contact details are as follows:

[contact details supplied]

Appendix 2: Potential participant response letter and consent form

September 2011.

TO INDIVIDUALS CONSIDERING PARTICIPATION IN PhD RESEARCH ON NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Thank you for showing an interest in being a participant of this research study. I would like to provide you with further written information concerning the research so you can choose to participate or not. Please take this information away with you, as I will not ask you to consent to your involvement in the study today: I wish to give you time to read and consider the material I have provided to you first.

The information that comes with this letter tells you what this study is about, how it will be conducted and what this may mean for you and your organisation. It should address most questions you may have about the study, but if you or your manager(s) have additional questions, I will be pleased to answer these in person or in writing.

What you can do next:

- Take time to read the information about the research study.
- If you wish, provide a copy of the information to your relevant manager(s).
- Contact me if you or your manager(s) have additional questions regarding the study.
- If you are willing to give consent to participate, contact me and keep the signed permission and consent forms (enclosed) for a first meeting.

I look forward to speaking to you in due course.

Yours Sincerely,

Ian Robson.

PhD Researcher and Senior Lecturer, Northumbria University.

INITIAL CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN PhD RESEARCH STUDY ON PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY CONDUCTED BY IAN ROBSON, NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY.

Your name [please print]: _____

Your contact details [please print]: _____

I give consent to participate in this PhD research into the subject of 'professional identity' and have read and understand the participants' information paper provided to me. Specifically, I provide consent with the understanding that:

I will be required to reflect and talk about myself and consider how I relate to aspects of my workplace. This may at times be thought provoking. Yes ☐ No ☐

Data collected for this research will be completely anonymised and will not identify myself, my organisation or colleagues. Data collected will be stored securely. Yes ☐ No ☐

I will be required to commit to approximately five interview based sessions which will each last between one to two hours over the course of twelve to sixteen months at times mutually suitable for myself and Ian Robson. Yes ☐ No ☐

Digital audio recordings of sessions will be made and stored securely on a password protected file on a Northumbria University computer system. This data will be stored until the research is completed and thesis is approved by Northumbria University (anticipated date December 2013, depending on progress and arrangements for examination)". This data will not be supplied to any other individual or organisation. Yes ☐ No ☐

Interview sessions will be conducted in a private room, with no distractions at either my workplace or an alternative venue such as Northumbria University (to be mutually agreed). . Yes ☐ No ☐

I will be offered the opportunity to review my consent for participation in the study at each meeting with Ian Robson. I may withdraw from the research at any time. Yes ☐ No ☐

I will have the opportunity to review and confirm the researchers' understanding of what I have said on a regular basis. Yes ☐ No ☐

Academic discussion of information I provide will feature in various publications including a PhD thesis and journal articles. These will be public documents. Yes ☐ No ☐

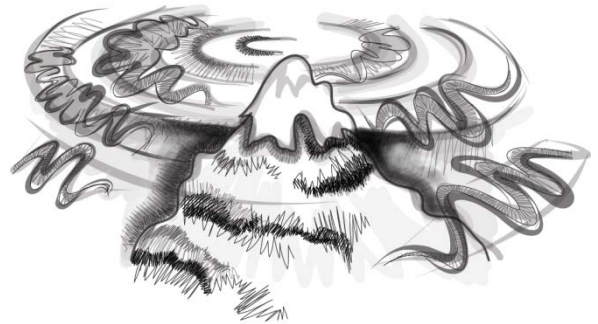
Signed:

Dated:

Appendix 3.1: Cartoons developed following Chris's first session



"How people like to be treated"



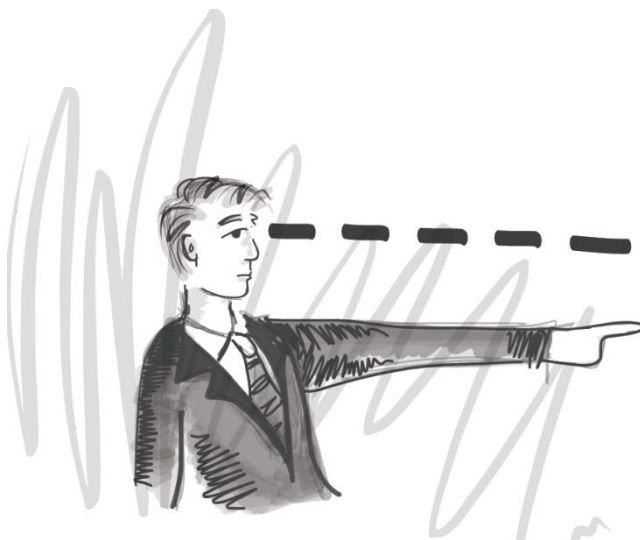
"It's guided my life since I really took up climbing"



"I always wear a suit and tie, always, jacket on"



"Everything I do and say is being watched by staff"

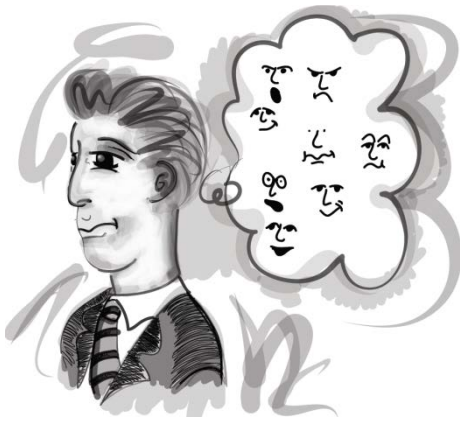


"You have a focus and everything else either supports you getting to that focus or it doesn't"



"I'm very proud to be a public servant"

Appendix 3.2: Cartoons Developed following Chris's second session



"You build up this bank of behaviours"



"They drive you...in the right context, they drive you, but in the wrong context for you – your values, they limit you"



"So I think that where they all coincide makes me really happy"



"We're really supportive: this is how it works"



"It's got to resonate with the person receiving the performance: they've got to believe it; so in that respect it has to be grounded in your values"



"You're taking the strengths that suit the situation, playing them up and then things that run counter you...play them down so you fit in"

Appendix 3.3: Cartoons Developed following Chris's third session



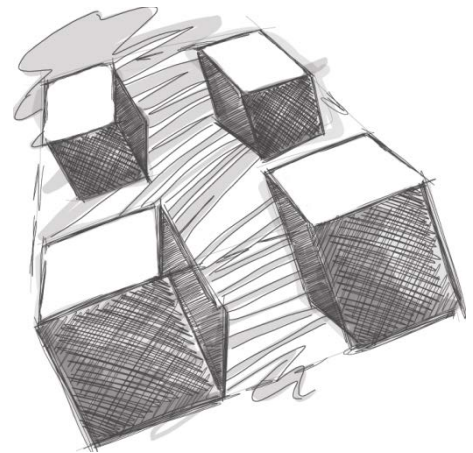
"What I really like is the passion people have"



"That need to...make a difference"



"You have to make sure that what you're saying and doing marry up"



Cornerstones:
honesty, respect, helping, integrity



"I don't want to be taken that seriously"



"(He's) amazing – he treats everyone the same"

Appendix 4.1: Cartoons developed following Sharon's first session



"I've jumped...and I've chosen to have my freedom a little bit"



"Organised: painful organisation"



"Well, it doesn't reflect me, does it?"



"It's the WOW factor!"



"I'm quite a strong leader"



"I ooze influence over everything"

Appendix 4.2: Cartoons developed following Sharon's second session



"I've 'honed in' that working out of what their expectations of me are"



"You're only here once; you're a long time dead"



"I think you have to be someone who is open to give as well as always take, or to take as well as give"



"If I've got awkward conversations to have I will always take it back to the children"



"Ooh: she remembers what I told her before!"

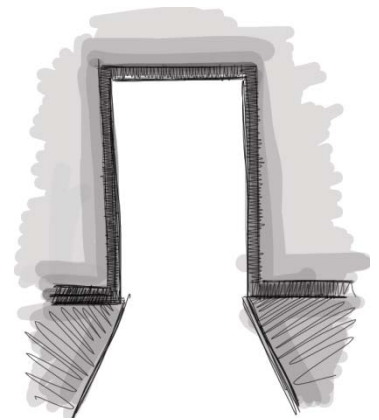


"Encouraging them to think beyond"

Appendix 4.3: Cartoons developed following Sharon's third session



"It's about the doing"



"I can just walk out of that door
and not come back"



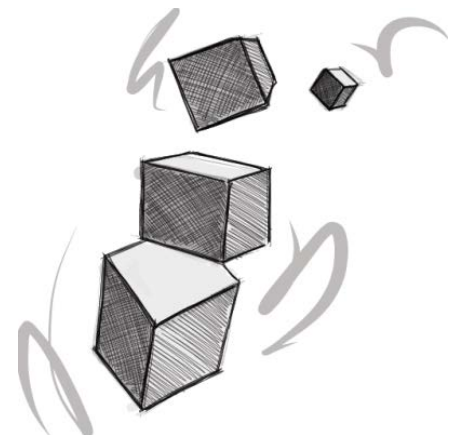
"Watching your back"



"Who's the biggest child?"



"They have to earn my respect: I
don't just give it automatically"



"It would be boring if everything
went right all the time"

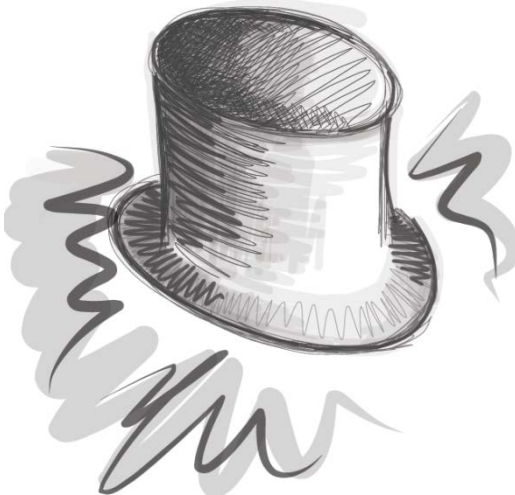
Appendix 5.1: Cartoons developed following Brenda's first session



"That's the only thing I knew I wanted – to manage"



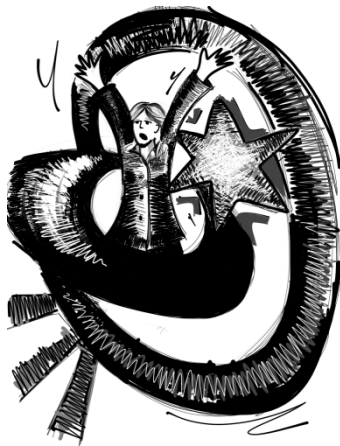
"Let's just roll with it"



"(A hat) is good in a crisis...it keeps you focused because your work hat does not have much emotion in it"



"Letting you work outside your comfort zone – which I thrive in"



"The trials and tribulations of..."



"Valued your opinion; could see your expertise"

Appendix 5.2: Cartoons developed following Brenda's second session



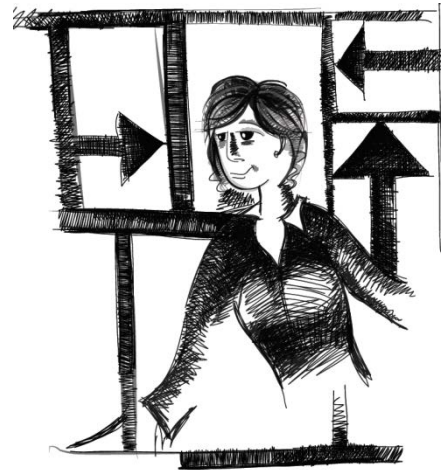
"Recognition: 'Oh, yeah, I know what you're saying'..."



"When you hit something where there's some similarity in situation...you're transferring lots of skills you've used before into that crisis"



"I think well what's this about, what happened last time, what's your agenda, what are you going to do with that information?"



"I wouldn't be able to do all this without the structure"



"There are times when I don't feel as if I have a place"



"I have a vision of how it needs to be....clear and task focused"

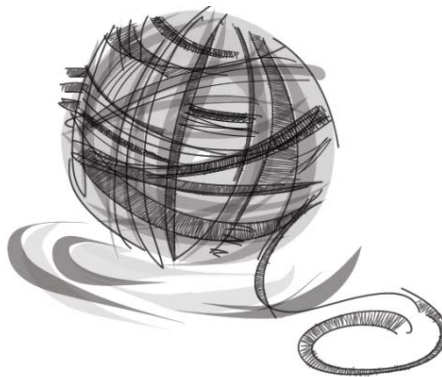
Appendix 5.3: Cartoons developed following Brenda's third session



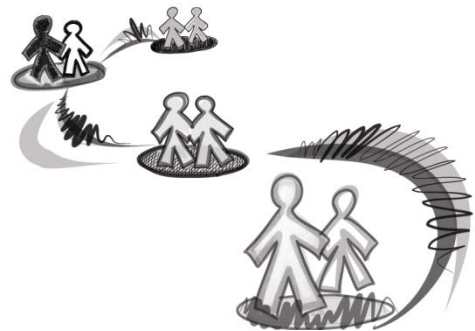
"Think differently – just for a moment in time"



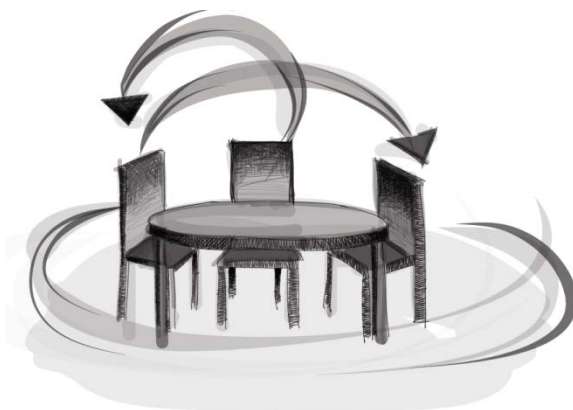
"There's people; I'm not naming people, but who are in my head right now who I'd just love to be like"



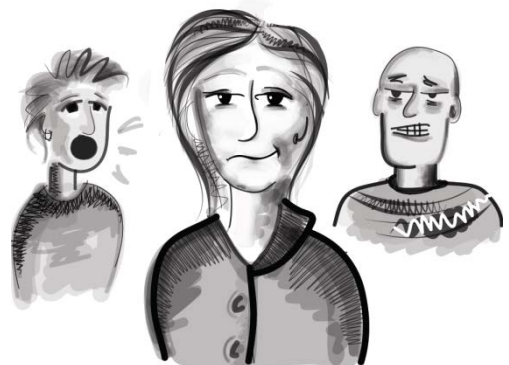
"I just like unpicking things...the challenge"



"The diverse people and situations I've worked in"



"More of an understanding of each other in the room"



"It's important that they know you've been in those situations as well"

Appendix 6.1: Cartoons developed following Diane's first session



"Almost as if you didn't belong, do you know what I mean?"



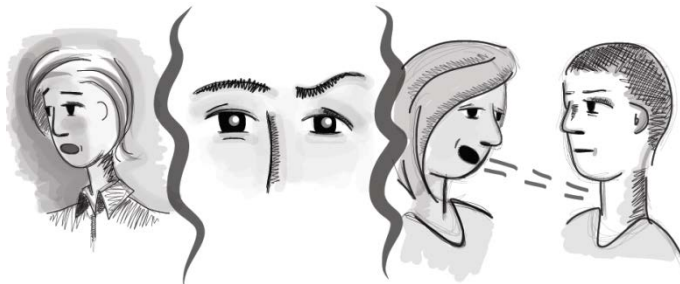
"So you're having to carve out your own role with how that's going to fit with everyone else"



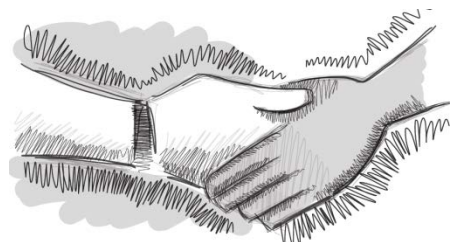
"It only takes a certain sort of person to be able to work in the community"



"...when I'm working with people what I know, then they'll take from me what they need to get."

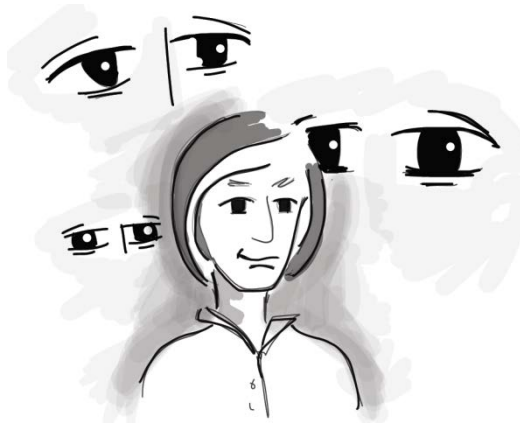


"...right; this is what I do, what do you do, what are we going to do together?"



"you need them to work with you.."

Appendix 6.2: Cartoons developed following Diane's second session



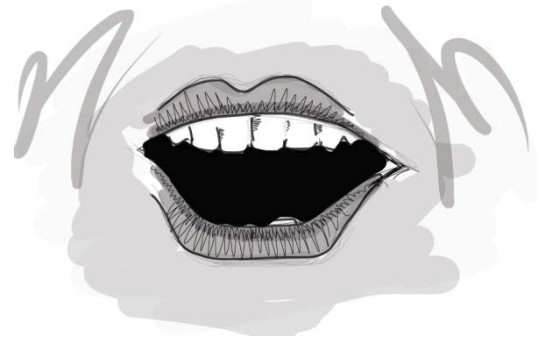
"I don't know if people in leadership positions see me as professional"



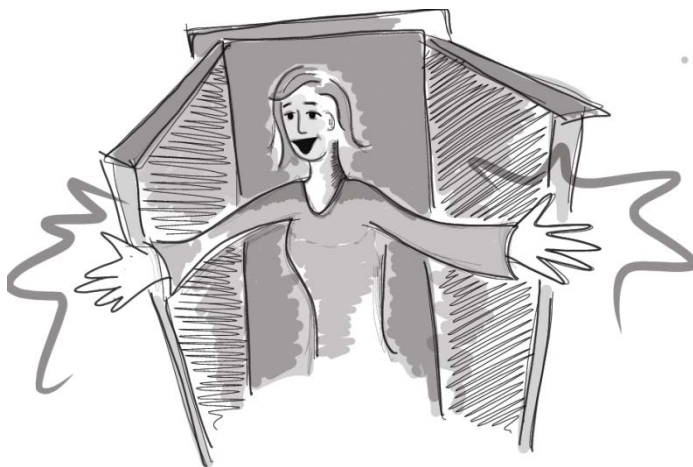
"And I think I do a good job and I am who I am and I've got here because of my hard work and they need to recognise...who I am!"



(Role) "At the minute, it's kinda what I'm about"



"I think, with me, I talk a lot"



"I always go in and arrive at work happy"

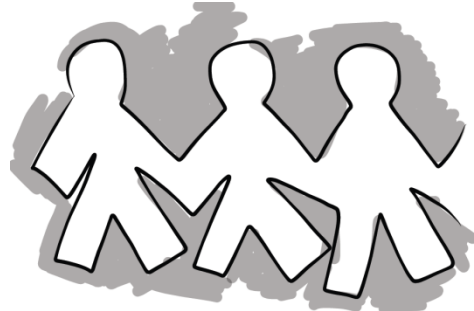


"Do I have to become someone that maybe I'm not?"

Appendix 6.3: Cartoons developed following Diane's third session



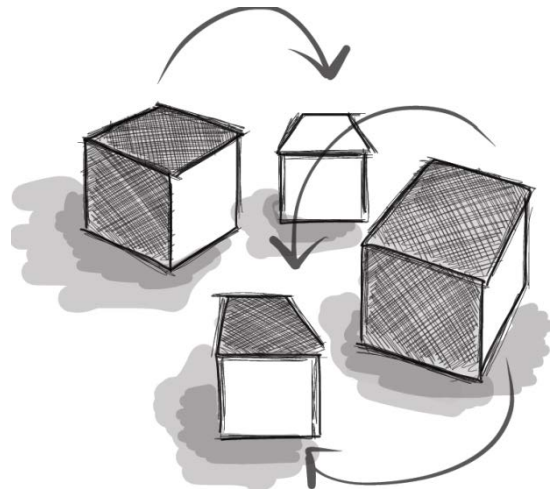
"I like open and honest"



"Come and see our family and see how we work together"



"Recognition that I can do a good job – that I'm a good worker"



"I like a lot of things and I can develop things and it changes all the time"



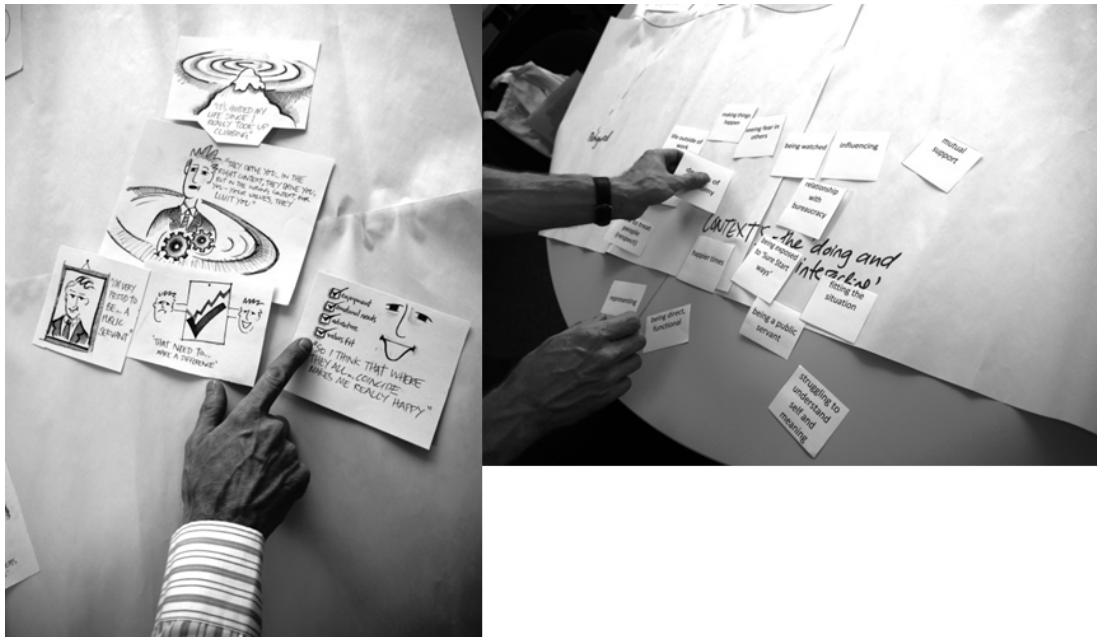
"You have to justify why you're here"



"Not just talking the talk but doing the walk"

The image shows a hand-drawn mind map on a white surface, centered around the word "NARRATIVES" with a lightning bolt icon. A wavy line connects the central node to two large rectangular boxes, one on the left and one on the right. The left box contains a 3x3 grid and is labeled "Profigured" below it. The right box also contains a 3x3 grid and is labeled "refiguration" below it. Arrows point from the central "NARRATIVES" node to these two boxes. Various sticky notes and cards are attached to the map, mostly along the wavy line and around the central node. The notes include:

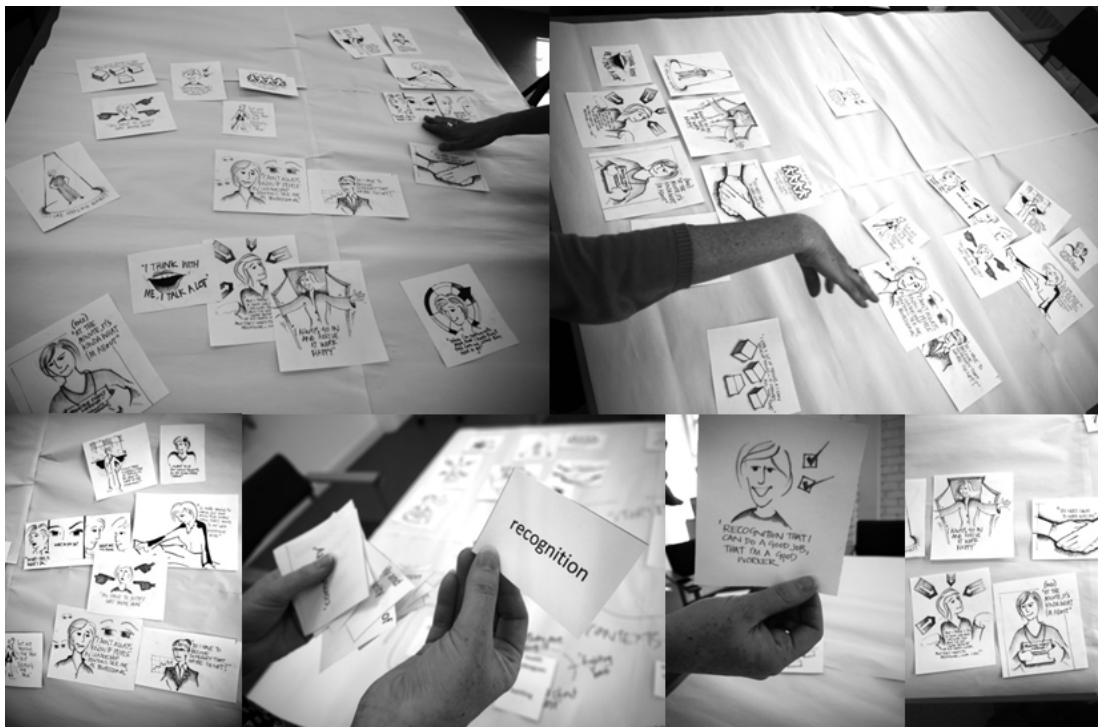
- Top Left:** "presentation of self, alienation", "being watched", "How do experiences turn into stories?", "making things happen being direct, functional", "consistency, backing up image", "understanding", "struggling to understand self and meaning", "cultural comparisons", "Who else helps make your narratives?", "Climbing narratives and metaphors", and "Contexts - the 'doing and interacting'" (at the bottom left).
- Top Right:** "worthwhile job, making a difference", "being a public servant", "degrees of autonomy", "How are you narratives 'use' received by or", "Do they contribute to others' stories?", "Why do you tell these stories?", and "Why do you choose what to share?" (at the bottom right).
- Center:** "NARRATIVES" with a lightning bolt icon.
- Other Notes:** "being watched", "making things happen being direct, functional", "consistency, backing up image", "understanding", "struggling to understand self and meaning", "cultural comparisons", "Who else helps make your narratives?", "Climbing narratives and metaphors", and "Contexts - the 'doing and interacting'" (at the bottom left).



[illegible]

Appendix 7.3: Brenda's table-top assemblage images



[illegible]

Appendix 8.1: Chris's practice-talk higher level codes illustrated as cartoons for use within in session 5.



bearings



manoeuvring



shaping

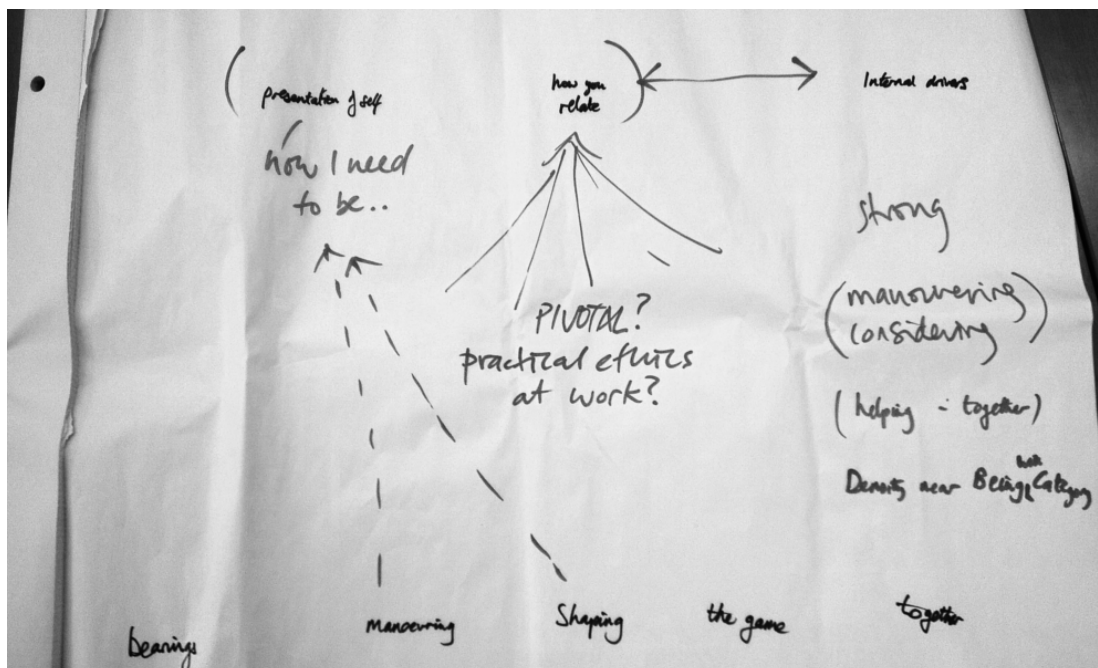


the game



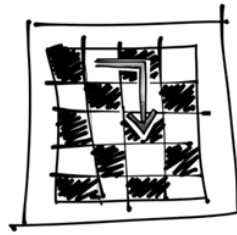
together

Chris preferred to make sense of things in session five in his own way



N.B. See Appendix 11.1 for Chris's self-practice talk map, which illustrates the higher level codes

Appendix 8.2: Sharon's practice-talk higher level codes illustrated as cartoons for use within in session 5.



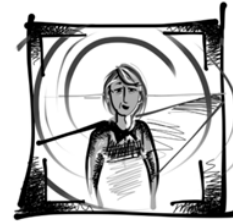
adapting



manoeuvring



noting



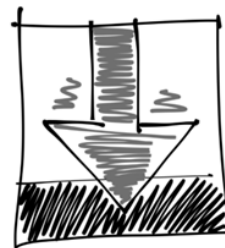
positioning



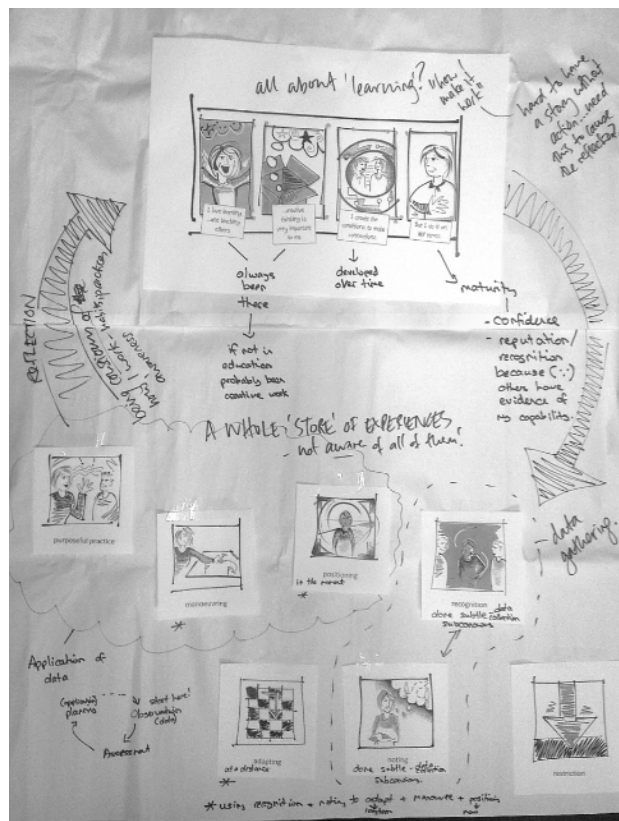
purposeful
practice



recognition



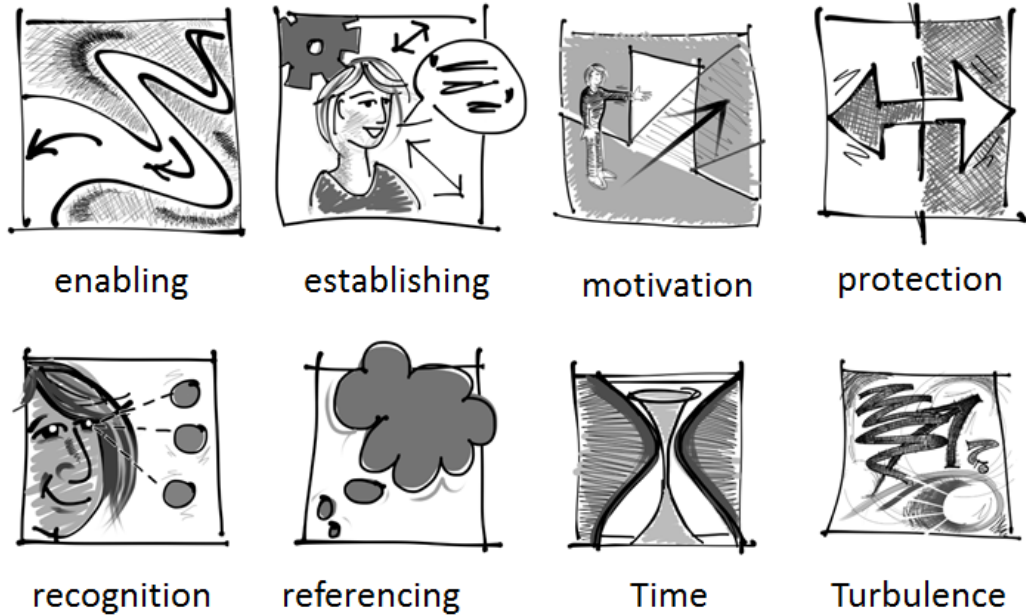
restriction



Cartoons in use in reflective work in session 5.

N.B. See Appendix 11.2 for Sharon's self-practice talk map, which illustrates the higher level codes

Appendix 8.3: Brenda's practice-talk higher level codes illustrated as cartoons for use within in session 5.

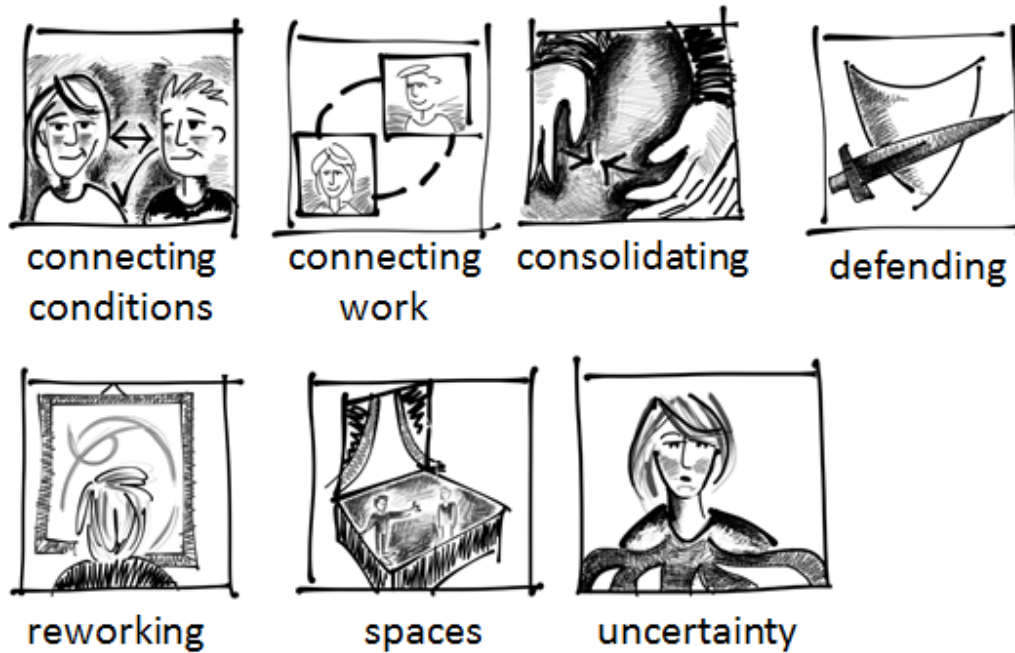


In use within reflective work in session 5:

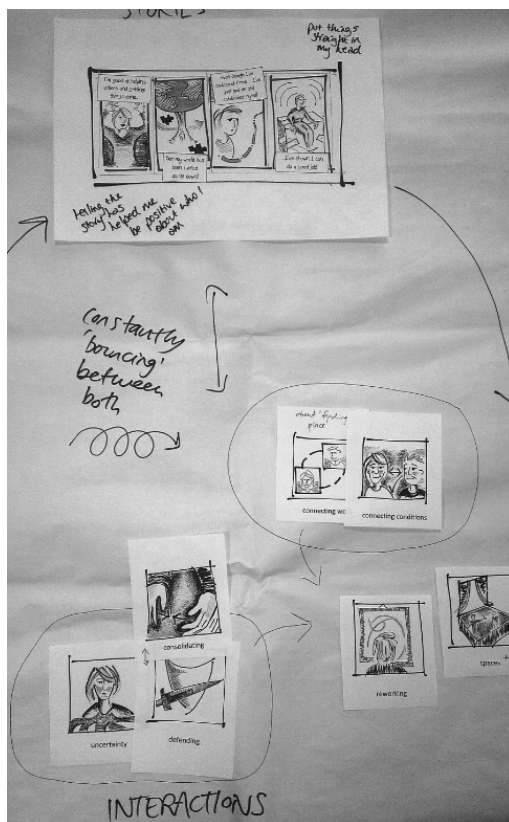


N.B. See Appendix 11.3 for Brenda's self-practice talk map, which illustrates the higher level codes

Appendix 8.4: Diane's practice-talk higher level codes illustrated as cartoons for use within in session 5.

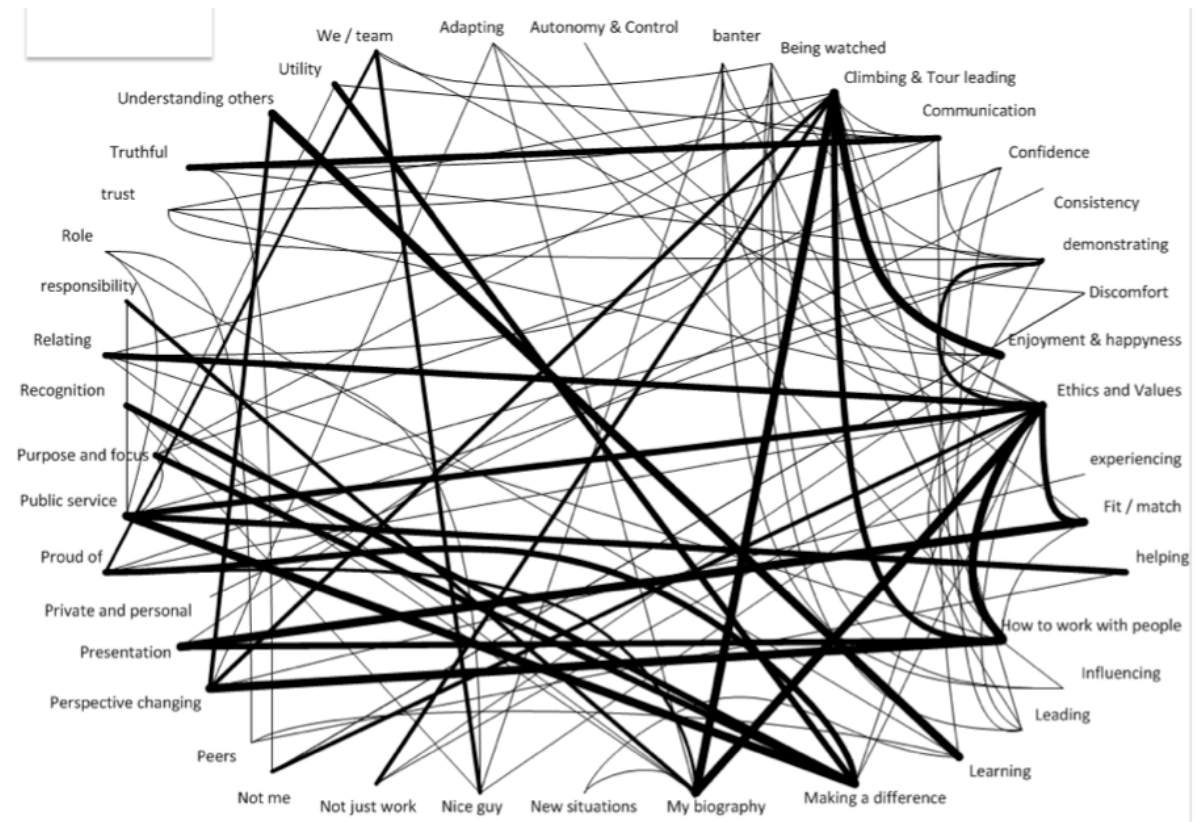


Cartoons in use in reflective work in session five:

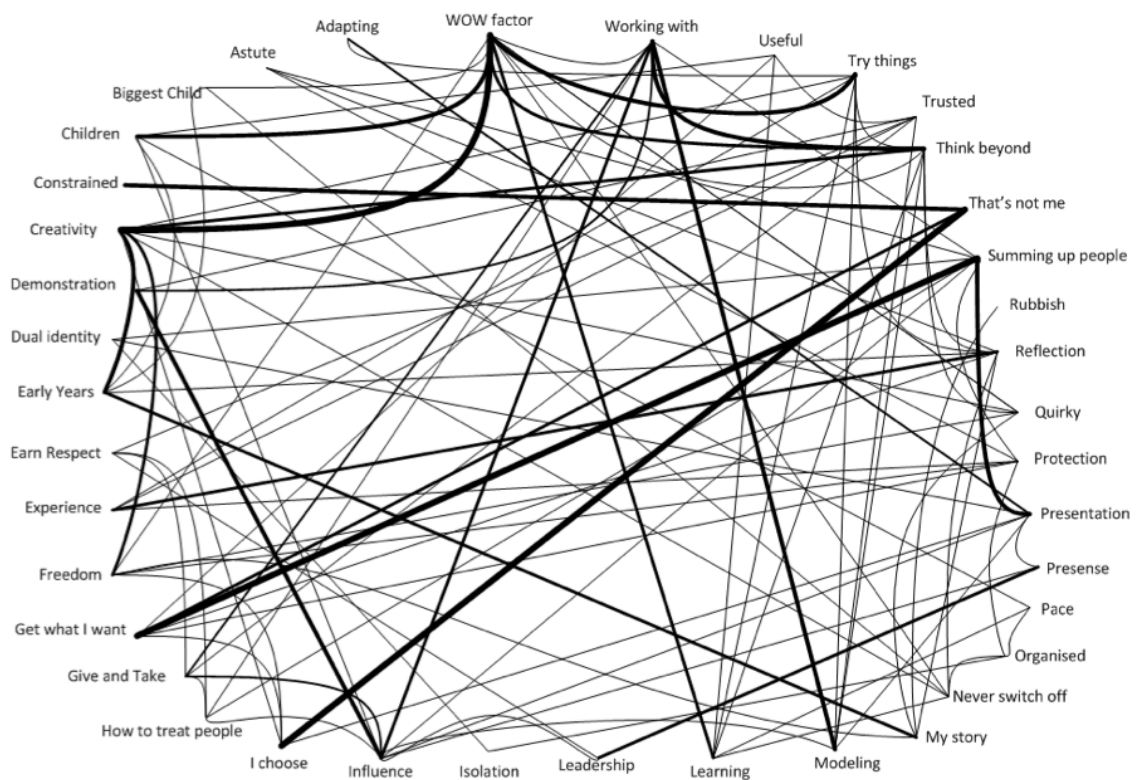


N.B. See Appendix 11.4 for Diane's self-practice talk map, which illustrates the higher level codes

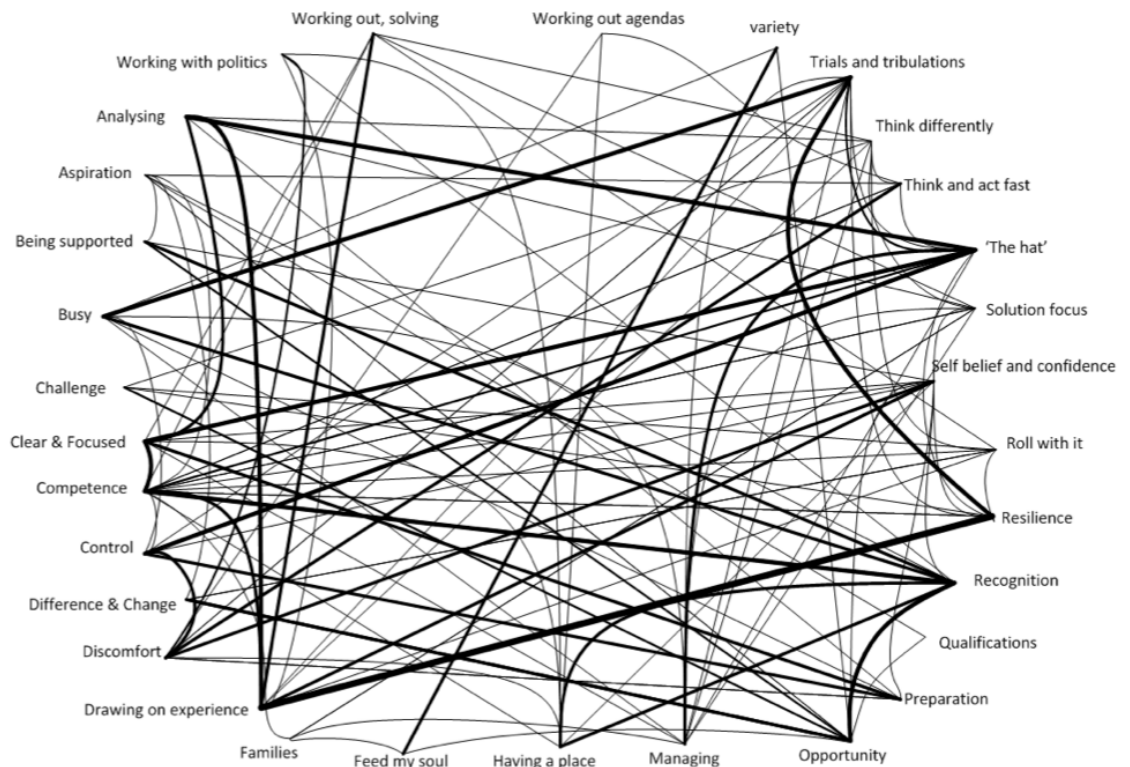
Appendix 9.1: Chris's self-talk map



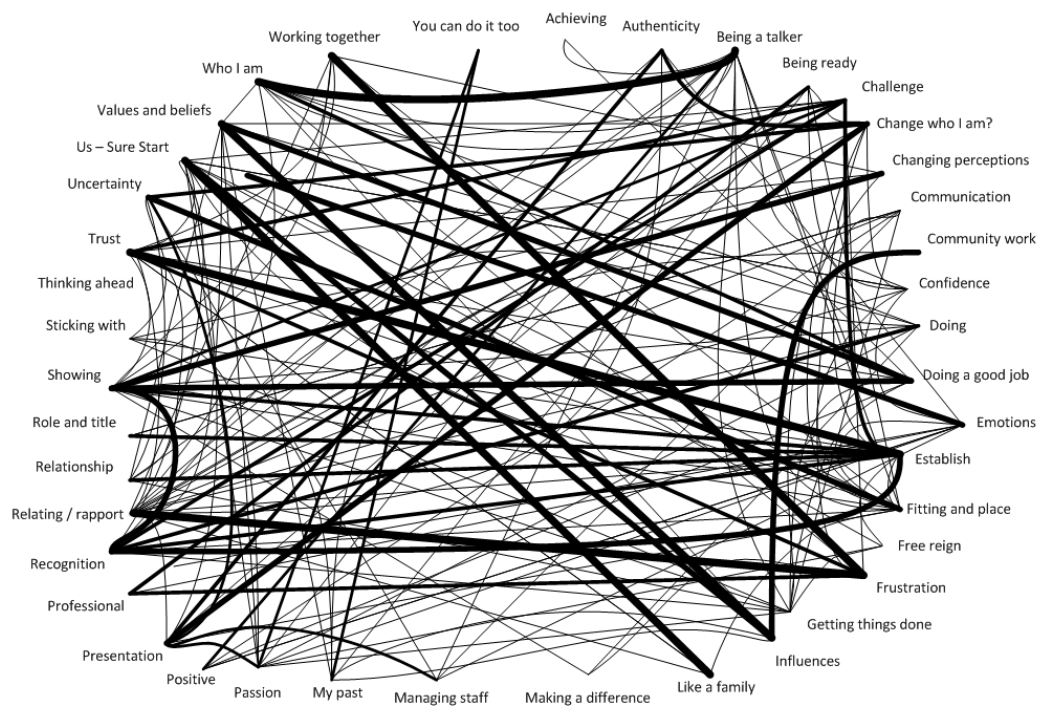
Appendix 9.2: Sharon's self-talk map



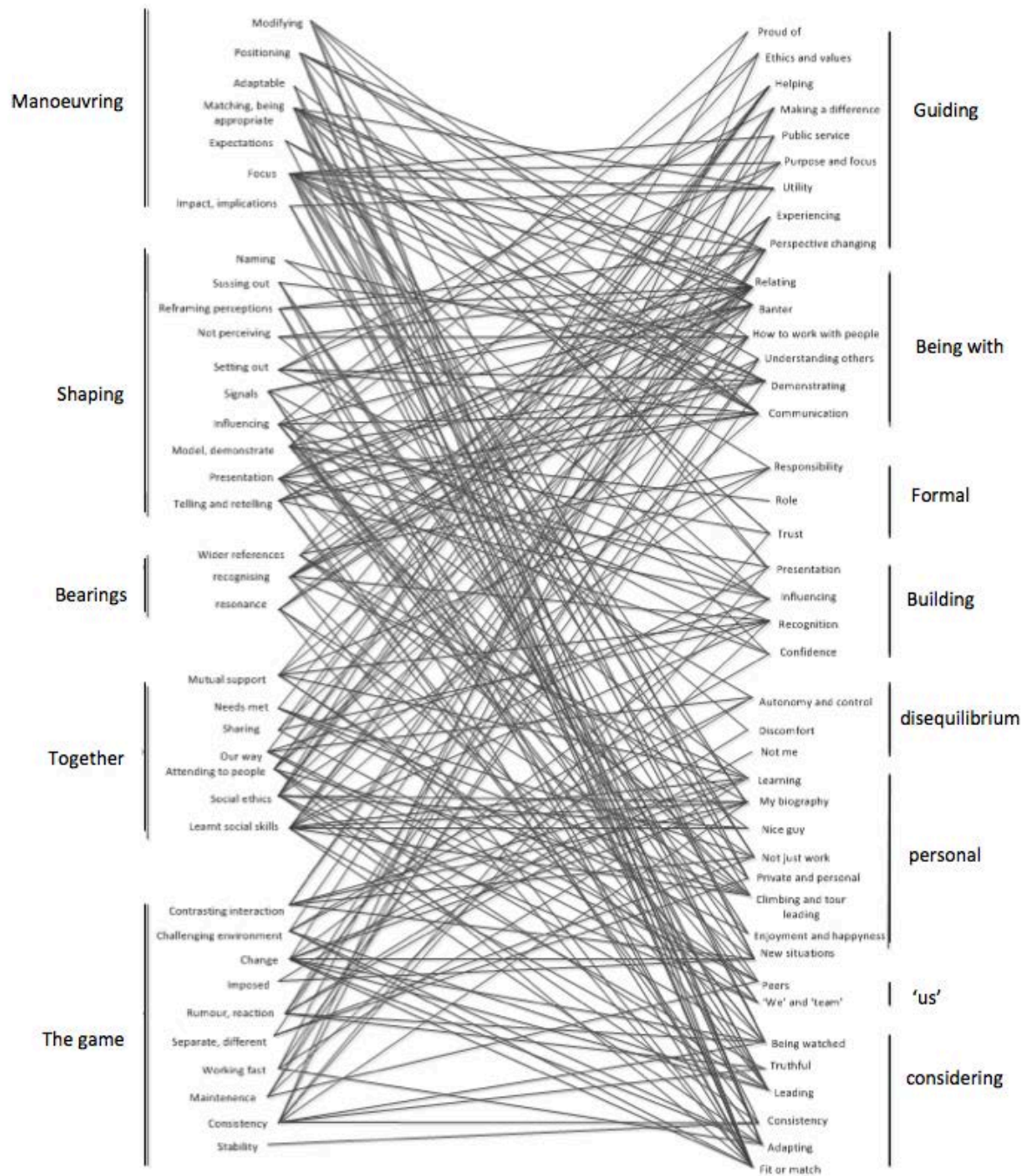
Appendix 9.3: Brenda's self-talk map



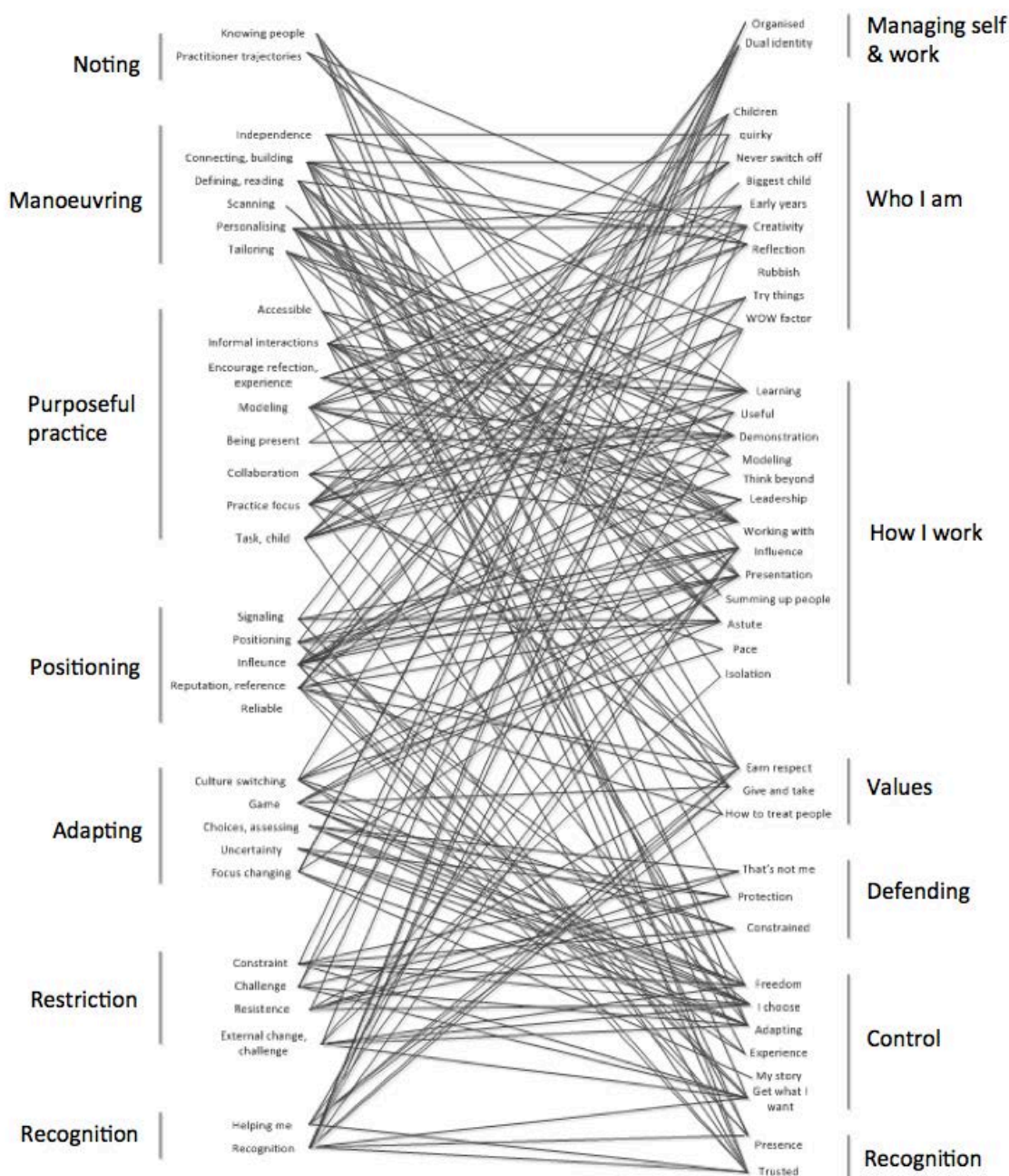
Appendix 9.4: Diane's self-talk map



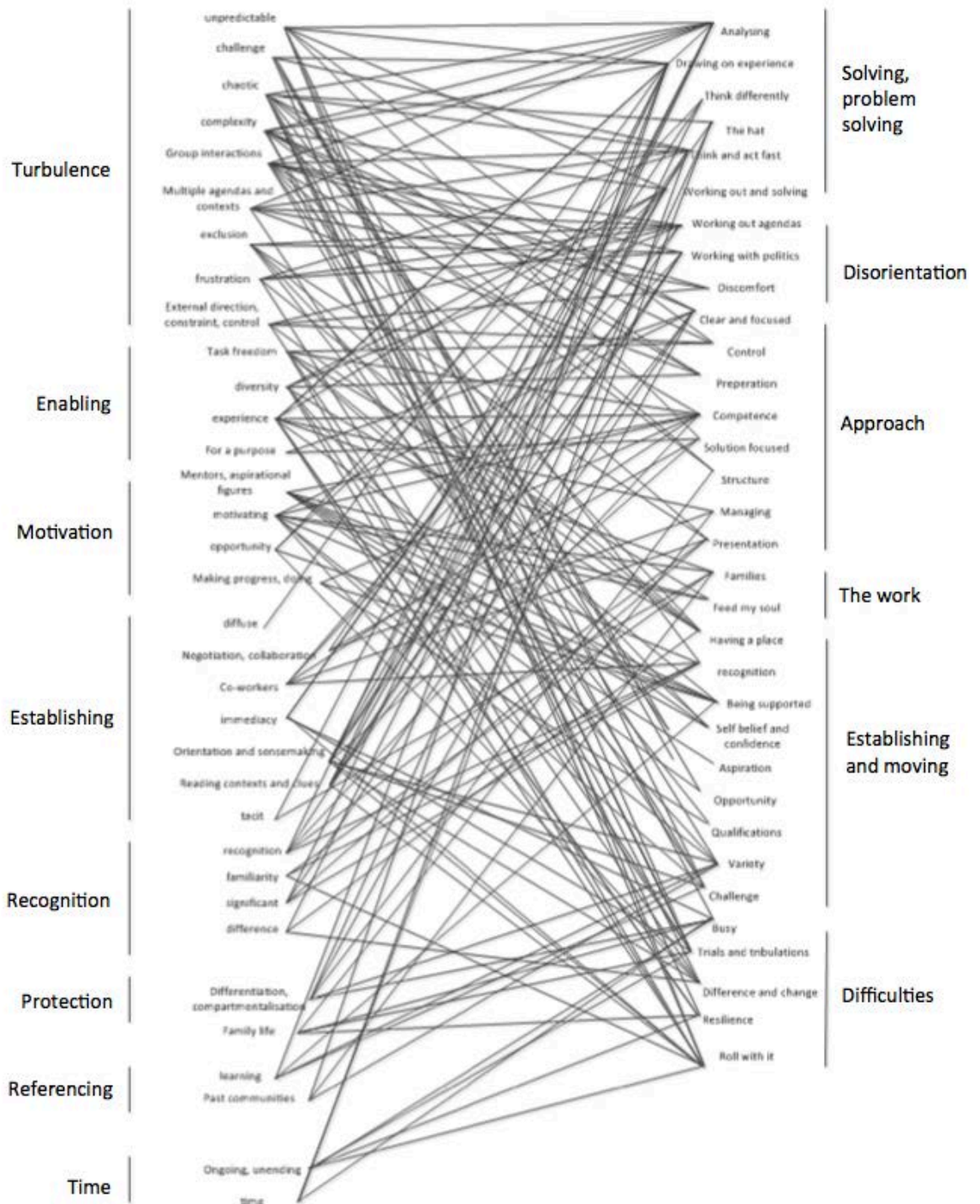
Appendix 10.1: Chris's self-practice talk map



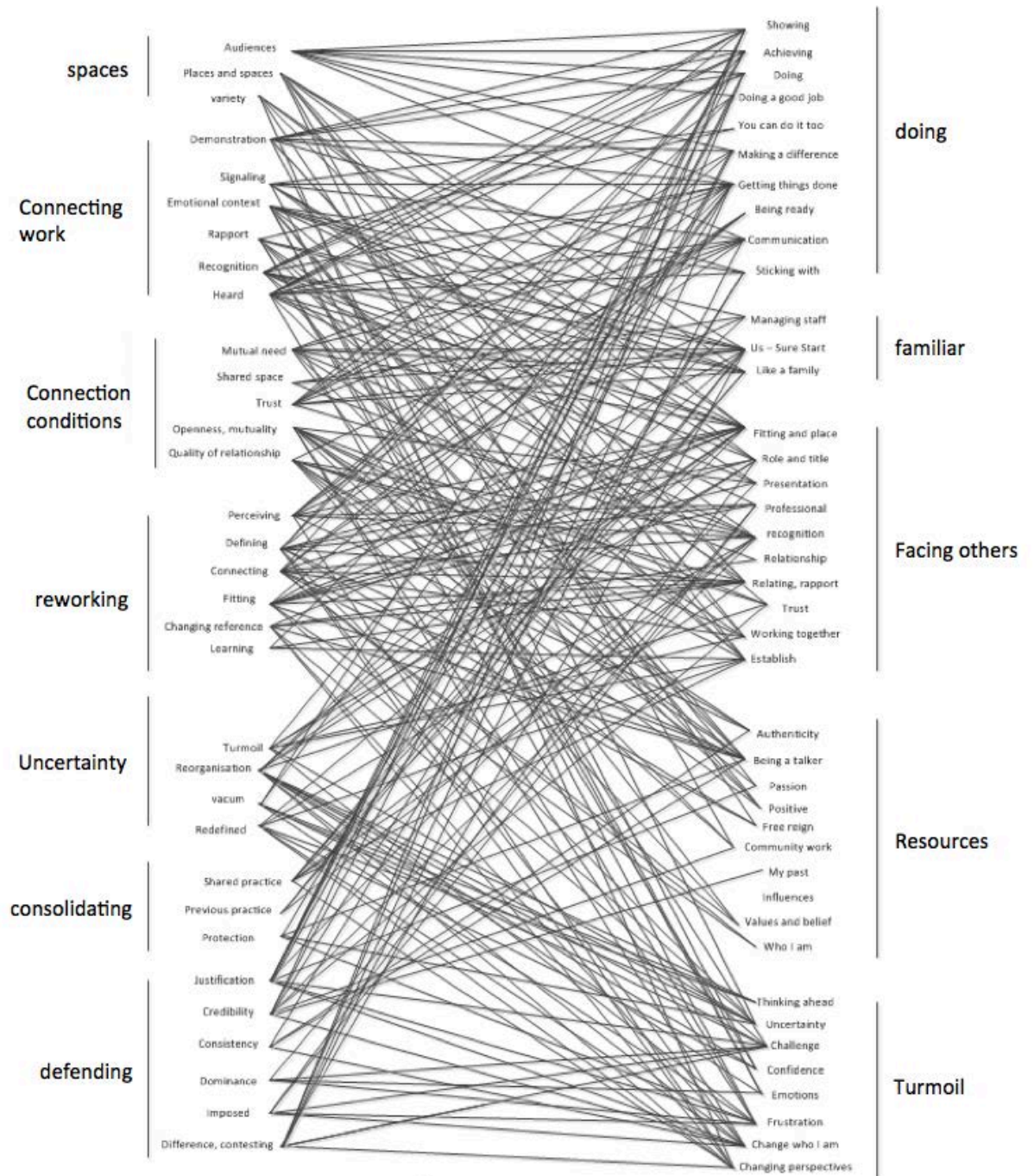
Appendix 10.2: Sharon's self-practice talk map



Appendix 10.3: Brenda's self-practice talk map



Appendix 10.4: Diane's self-practice talk map



Appendix 11. Glossary of terms.

| Term or concept | Rationale |
|------------------------|--|
| Identity / Self | Refers to narrative identity as defined by Ricoeur (1983/1990). Use of the term “identity” in this thesis therefore general refers both to identity (<i>idem</i>) and selfhood (<i>ipse</i>). Where I wish to make a specific point that only applies to identity, (identification, role) this is noted, and I use the term “identity” in a narrow sense. The terms self or selfhood will be used for more specific reference to what makes an individual unique and intentional (see <i>Ipse</i> identity, below). |
| Idem identity | That aspect of self which can be identified, and re-identified in space and time. The subject of records or historical accounts. With reference to Ricoeur (1983/1990). |
| Ipse identity | That aspect of self which initiates and is innovative or creative. With reference to Ricoeur (1983/1990). |
| Narrative | A general term describing talk used in dialogue or as a text. |
| Self-talk | A phrase used in this thesis to refer to narrative data where an individual personally identifies with or ascribes to themselves, such as a value, characteristic or habit. Self-talk is therefore the explicit and relatively stable and mature form of narrative identity. |
| Practice-talk | A phrase used in this thesis to refer to narrative data which principally talks about an individuals' practices with others or interactional context. As discussed in the findings and discussion chapter, there is a link between self and practice talk, and both exist on a spectrum of talk, but they are artificial poles of this spectrum which draw attention to different ‘types’ of talk used by participants. |
| Life-project | The phrase life-project or life-plan is used by Ricoeur, and in this thesis, to refer to that which mediates individuals' ideals (which are abstract) and practices (which are fragmentary or temporal). A life-plan, Ricoeur (1960/1978, p.71; 1990/1994, p.158) argues, relates to the configuration of a “narrative unity” of a life. My use of the term emphasises the self as something shown and told over time, and is used where I wish to broaden a definition of selfhood beyond a strictly ‘narrative only’ definition. |
| Practice | Sets of related actions, usually undertaken with others: “practices are based on actions in which the agent takes into account, as a matter of principle, the actions of others” (Ricoeur, 1986/2008). I use this term to refer to actions in the professional ‘worlds’ of participants. |
| Practice-world | An alternative term for professional ‘life-world’ developed for the thesis. The term ‘life-world’ is borrowed by Ricoeur who in turn draws upon the work of Husserl (1931/2012) and Heidegger (1927/2010). Husserl (1939/1973) used the term “ <i>Lebenswelt</i> ”, or life-world, to describe “the immediate intuition and experience” of life (p.45). Ricoeur (1990/1994) also draws on Heidegger’s (1927/2010) idea of <i>Dasein</i> or being-in-the-world, which denotes involvement with and care for the world (p.57) and |

| | |
|--|---|
| | an average everydayness (p.44) to define, ontologically, possibilities for being. |
| Hermeneutic | A term generally used to discuss the interpretation of texts (Jasper, 2004). Texts, or things like texts, are things to be 'made sense' of (Taylor, 1985). Ricoeur's own philosophy is hermeneutic, but he rejects 'romantic' hermeneutics, which focuses on hidden meaning, and extends the study of the text to relate to life and the reception of texts through the concept of the mimetic spiral (see below). |
| Mimesis / mimetic spiral | Ricoeur's (1983/1990, p.33) specific use of the term <i>mimesis</i> , which itself draws on Aristotle's work, <i>Poetics</i> , describes the imitation or representation of action (1983/1990, p.33). Ricoeur's development of this concept focuses on the text, involves enplotment, but rejects the idea of mimesis as a simple copy (p.34). Ricoeur (1983/1990) offers his vision of Mimesis ₁ (prefiguration), Mimesis ₂ (configuration) and Mimesis ₃ (refiguration) connected in a spiral, moving forward in time. |
| Prefiguration (Mimesis₁) | Ricoeur's (1990/1994, p.157) reference to experience that prefigures narrative, and also connects to Husserl's (1931/2012) concept of <i>life-world</i> and's (1927/2010) concept of <i>Dasein</i> (see above). |
| Configuration (Mimesis₂) | Ricoeur's reference to configured narratives or texts, where action is subject to enplotment. Configured texts mediate experience (Mimesis ₁) and understanding (Mimesis ₃) (1983/1990, p.53) |
| Refiguration (Mimesis₃) | Ricoeur's (1983/1990, p.53, p.70) reference to the third stage of mimesis where there is a <i>reception</i> or <i>application</i> of what is configured in the practice (life) world. |
| Narrative space | An abstract, metaphorical expression used in this thesis to refer to narratives (used, in use and potential) represented in a single conceptual space. Here, narratives are conceived as marks or paths. The idea is inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's (1987/2013) discussion of trajectories, planes, lines of flight and rhizomatic organisation. |
| Narrative elements | A term used to refer to smaller narratives, as opposed to larger, established 'stories'. |
| Big Stories | A term used to refer to larger, well established narratives about the self which provide context and framing of smaller narrative elements or actions. |
| Map | A term discussed in the methodology chapter to refer to visual (not cartographic) representations of relationships between codes in narrative data. |

References

- Aaltio-Marjosola, Iiris., & Mills, Albert J. (Eds.), (2002), *Gender, identity and the culture of organizations*. London: Routledge.
- Akkerman, S. F., (2011), Learning at boundaries. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 50(1), pp.21-25.
- Allen, Graham., (2011, January), *Early Intervention: The next steps*. (Ref. 404489 / 0111), London: Cabinet Office.
- Alvesson, Mats., Hardy, Cynthia., & Harley, Bill., (2008), Reflecting on Reflexivity: Reflexive Textual Practices in Organization and Management Theory. *Journal of Management Studies*, 45(3), pp. 480-501.
- Alvesson, Mats., & Sveningsson, Stefan., (2003), Managing Managerial Identities: Organizational Fragmentation, Discourse and Identity Struggle. *Human Relations*, 56(10), pp.1163-1193.
- Ang, Lynn., (2012), Leading and Managing in the Early Years: A Study of the Impact of a NCSL Programme on Children's Centre Leaders' Perceptions of Leadership and Practice. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 40(3), pp. 289-304.
- Anning, Angela., Cottrell, David., Frost, Nick., Green, Josephine., & Robinson, Mark., (2006), *Developing multiprofessional teamwork for integrated children's services*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Anon. Sure Start Ignores Health Visitors, (1999, April 7th – 13th), *Nursing Standard*, Vol. 13, Issue 29, p.7 Retrieved from: <http://search.proquest.com/docview/219797806?accountid=12860>
- Antaki, Charles., & Widdicombe, Sue. (Eds.), (1998), *Identities in talk*. London: Sage Publications.
- Archer, Margaret S., (2003), *Structure, Agency and the Internal Conversation*: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ardener, Shirley., & Moore, Fiona. (Eds.), (2007), *Professional identities: policy and practice in business and bureaucracy*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Aristotle. (1996), *Poetics* (Penguin Classics) (J. Sachs, Trans.) (New Ed. ed.). London: Penguin.
- Asch, T. Chagnon, N (1975) *The Axe Fight* (30 mins). University Park, PA/Watertown, MA. Center for Documentary Anthropology, Pennsylvania State University, Documentary Educational Resources.

- Atkins, Kim., & MacKensie, Catriona. (Eds.). (2008), *Practical Identity and Narrative Agency*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Aubrey, Carol. (2007), *Leading and Managing in the Early Years*. London: Sage Publications.
- Augustine. (2002), *Confessions*. (R. S. Pine-Coffin (Ed.)). London: Penguin Classics.
- Austin, J. L. (1975), *How to do things with words* (2nd ed.), Harvard: Harvard University Press.
- Bakhurst, David., & Sypnowich, Christine. (Eds.), (1995), *The Social Self: Enquiries in Social Construction*. London: Sage Publications.
- Ball, Mog. (July 2002), *Getting Sure Start Started*. (DfES National Evaluation of Sure Start, Research report Ref. NESS/FR/02), Nottingham: DfES Publications. Retrieved from:
<http://www.ness.bbk.ac.uk/implementation/documents/159.pdf>
- Ball, S. J. (2003), The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *Journal of Education Policy*, 18(2), pp. 215-228.
- Bamfield, Louise. (2011), Beginning the Big Society in the Early Years. *The Political Quarterly*, 82, pp. 158-177.
- Banks, M. & Zeitlyn, D. (2015), *Visual Methods in Social Research*, London: Sage.
- Barnett, Neil. (2011), Local Government at the Nexus?, *Local Government Studies*, 37(3), pp. 275-290.
- Barthes, Roland. (1993), *Image Music Text* (New Ed.), Hammersmith, London: Fontana Press.
- Bartlett, Ruth. (2013), Playing with meaning: using cartoons to disseminate research findings. *Qualitative Research*, 13(2), pp. 214-227.
- Baudrillard, Jean.(1994), *Simulacra and Simulation*, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press
- Beijaard, D., Meijer, P.C., & Verloop, N. (2004), Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and teacher education*, 20(2), pp. 107-128.
- Belsky, J., Barnes, J., & Melhuish, E. (Eds.), (2007), *The National Evaluation of Sure Start: does area based early intervention work?*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Berger, John. (1972). *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin.
- Bernstein, Richard J. (2010), *The Pragmatic Turn*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Binns, J. (2008), The Ethics of Relational Leading: Gender Matters, *Gender - Work and Organization*, 15(6), pp. 600-620.
- Bishop, Emily C., & Shepherd, Marie L. (2011), Ethical reflections: examining reflexivity through the narrative paradigm. *Qualitative Health Research*, 21(9), pp. 1283-1294.
- Bloom, P. J. (1997), Navigating the rapids: Directors reflect on their career and professional development. *Young Children*, 52(7), pp.32-38.
- Bloom, P. J. (2000), How Do We Define Director Competence? *Child Care Information Exchange* (132), pp.13-18.
- Blumer, Herbert. (1992), *Symbolic Interactionism: perspective and method*, London: University of California Press. (Originally published 1969)
- Blundell, Boyd. (2010). *Paul Ricoeur Between Theology and Philosophy: Detour and Return*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. (1993). *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Brown, Andrew D., & Humphreys, Michael. (2002), Narratives of Organizational Identity and Identification: A Case Study of Hegemony and Resistance, *Organization Studies*, 23(3), pp. 421-447.
- Brown, A. D., Stacey, P. & Nandhakumar, J. (2008), Making sense of sensemaking narratives. *Human Relations*, 61(8), pp.1035-1062.
- Bruner, Jerome. (1977). *The Process of Education* (2nd Revised Edition). Harvard: Harvard University Press. (Originally published 1960)
- Bruner, Jerome. (1991). The Narrative Construction of Reality. *Critical Inquiry*, 18(1), pp. 1-21.
- Bruner, Jerome. (2003). *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.
- Bruner, Jerome. (2004). Life as Narrative. *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, 71(3).
- Bujold, Charles. (2004), Constructing career through narrative. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 64(3), pp. 470-484.
- Burkitt, Ian. (2008), *Social Selves: theories of self and society* (2nd Edition ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Burkitt, Ian. (2012), Emotional Reflexivity: Feeling, Emotion and Imagination in Reflexive Dialogues. *Sociology*, 46(3), pp. 458-472.
- Butler, Judith. (1999), *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge.

- Butler, Patrick. (2012, 9th October). Sure Start cuts: confusion reigns. Guardian Newspaper. Retrieved from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/patrick-butler-cuts-blog/2012/oct/09/sure-start-confusion-over-cuts-nursery-care>
- Butler, Patrick. (2013, Monday 28th January). Hundreds of Sure Start centres have closed since the election, says Labour. *Guardian Newspaper*. Retrieved from: <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/jan/28/sure-start-centres-closed-labour>
- Butler-Kisber, Lynn., & Poldma, Tuii. (2010), The Power of Visual Approaches in Qualitative Inquiry: The Use of Collage Making and Concept Mapping in Experiential Research. *Journal of Research Practice*, 6(2).
- Carr, David. (1991), *Time, Narrative and History* (Reprinted Edition). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Carr, David. (1998). *The Paradox of Subjectivity: The Self in the Transcendental Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Carr, David., Taylor, Charles., & Ricoeur, P. (1991). Discussion. In D. Wood (Ed.), *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation*, pp. 160-187, London: Routledge.
- Carreira de Silva, Filipe. (2007). *G.H. Mead - a critical introduction*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Charmaz, K. (2008). A future for symbolic interactionism. *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, 32, pp. 51-59.
- Clandinin, D. Jean., & Connelly, F. Michael. (2004), *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*. San Fransisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Clarke, Adele, E. (2005). *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory After the Postmodern Turn*. London: Sage Publications.
- Clegg, Stewart., & Hardy, Cynthia. (1996), Representations. In S. Clegg, C. Hardy & W. R. Nord (Eds.), *Handbook of Organization Studies* (pp. 676-708). London: Sage Publications.
- Clough, P., Goodley, D., Lawthom, R., & Moore, M. (2004). *Researching Life Stories: Method, Theory and Analyses in a Biographical Age* (New ed.), London: Routledge.
- Colley, Helen. (2006). Learning to Labour with Feeling: Class, Gender and Emotion in Childcare Education and Training. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 7(1), pp.15-29.

- Collier, J. (1967) revised to Collier, J., Collier, M. (1986) *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method*. Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press.
- Cramme, O., & Diamond, P. (Eds.), (2012), *After the Third Way: The Future of Social Democracy in Europe*. London: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd.
- Crotty, Michael. (1998). *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*. London: Sage Publications.
- Cunliffe, Ann L, & Eriksen, Matthew. (2011), Relational leadership. *Human Relations*, 64(11), pp. 1425-1449.
- Curtis, Lesley, & Burton, Diana. (2009). Naive change agent or canny political collaborator? The change in leadership role from nursery school to Children's Centre. *Education 3-13*, 37(3), pp. 287-299.
- Children's Workforce Development Council. (2009). *The Team around the child (TAC) and the Lead Professional: A guide for managers*. Leeds: Children's Workforce Development Council. Retrieved from: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/http://www.w.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/LeadPro_Managers-Guide.pdf
- Czarniawska, B. (1997), *Narrating the Organization: Dramas of Institutional Identity* Chicago, IL.: University of Chicago Press.
- Czarniawska, B. (2004), *Narratives in Social Science Research* London: Sage Publications.
- Czarniawska, B., & Gagliardi, P. (Eds.). (2003), *Narratives we Organise By*. Amsterdam: John Benjamin Publishing Company.
- Dahlberg, G., & Moss, P. (2005), *Ethics and Politics in early childhood education*. Oxfordshire: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Dahlberg, G., Moss, P., & Pence, A. (2013). *Beyond quality in early childhood education and care* (3rd Edition). Oxon: Routledge.
- Dalli, Carmen., & Urban, M. (Eds.) (2012), *Professionalism in early childhood education and care: international perspectives*. London: Routledge.
- Daniels, Harry. (2001), *Vygotsky and Pedagogy*, London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Daniels, Harry. (2008), *Vygotsky and Research*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Daniels, Harry., Edwards, Anne., Leadbetter, Jane., Martin, Deirdre., Brown, Steve., & Middleton, David. (2008), *Learning in and for Interagency Working: Full Research Report*. Swindon: ESRC.
- Daniels, Harry., Leadbetter, Jane., Warmington, Paul., Edwards, Anne., Martin, Deirdre., Popova, Anna., . . . Brown, Steve. (2007). Learning in

and for multi-agency working. *Oxford Review of Education*, 33(4), pp. 521-538.

Davenport, Helen. (2012). Clipboards and cups of tea: two women's narrative constructions of professional identity in Sure Start outreach work. *Early Years*, 32(3), pp. 277-287.

Davenport, J. J. (2012), *Narrative Identity, Autonomy and Mortality: From Frankfurt and MacIntyre to Keirgaard*. Oxon: Routledge.

De Fina, Anna., & Georgakopoulou, Alexandra. (2008). Analysing narratives as practices. *Qualitative Research*, 8(3), pp. 379-387.

Del Corso, Jennifer., & Rehfuss, Mark C. (2011), The role of narrative in career construction theory. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 79(2), pp. 334-339.

Deleuze, Gilles., & Guattari, Felix. (2013). *A Thousand Plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*. London: Bloomsbury Academic. (Originally published 1987).

Denis, Jean-Louis., Langley, Ann. and Rouleau, Linda. (2010), The Practice of Leadership in the Messy World of Organizations. *Leadership*, 6(1), pp.67-88.

Dent, Mike., & Whitehead, Stephen. (Eds.) (2nd Ed.), (2013). *Managing Professional Identities: Knowledge, Performativities and the 'New' Professional*, London: Routledge.

Denzin, N.K. (1997). *Interpretive Ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21st Century*. London: Sage Publications.

Denzin, N.K. (1989). *Interpretive biography*. London: Sage Publications.

Denzin, N.K. (2014). *Interpretive autoethnography* (2nd Edition). London: Sage Publications.

Derrida, J. (1984). *Margins of Philosophy*. Chicago, IL.: University of Chicago Press. (Originally published 1982)

Department for Education (2011). *Supporting Families in the Foundation Years*. (Ref. DFE-01001-2011), Nottingham: DfE publications.
Retrieved from:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-families-in-the-foundation-years>

Department for Education (2013) Sure Start children's centres statutory guidance: For local authorities, commissioners of local health services and Jobcentre Plus (Ref. DFE-00314-2013) Retrieved from:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/273768/childrens_centre_stat_guidance_april_2013.pdf

- Department for Education and Employment (1998) Meeting the Childcare Challenge: the national childcare strategy. (Cmnd 3959), London: HMSO.
- Department for Education and Employment. (1999). *Sure Start: A Guide for Trailblazers*. Nottingham: DfEE Publications.
- Department for Education and Employment (2000). *Sure start: a guide for second-wave programmes*. Nottingham: HMSO.
- Department for Education and Skills (2003a). *Sure Start Guidance 2004 - 2006: Section 1: overview and local delivery arrangements*. Nottingham: DfES Publications.
- Department for Education and Skills. (2003b). *Characteristics of Sure Start Local Programme Areas Rounds 1-4: National Evaluation Report*. (from the National Evaluation of Sure Start Team at Birbeck, IoE) Nottingham: DfES Publications.
- Department for Education and Skills. (2004), *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*. Nottingham: DfES Publications. Retrieved from <http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=7772>.
- Department for Education and Skills. (2005a), *Early Impacts of SSLPs on Children and Families*. (from the National Evaluation of Sure Start, Birbeck, IoE: Melhuish, E., Belsky, J., & Leyland, A.) Nottingham: DfES Publications.
- Department for Education and Skills. (2005b) *Implementing Sure Start Local Programmes: An In-Depth Study*. (from the National Evaluation of Sure Start Team at Birbeck, IoE, by: Tunstill, J., Meadows, P., Allnock, D., Akhurst, S., Chrysanthau, J., Garbers, C. et al., Birkbeck, University of London. Institute of Education.) Nottingham: DfES Publications.
- Department for Education and Skills (2005c), *Sure Start Practice Guidance*, Nottingham: DfES Publications. Retrieved from: <http://southwarkheads.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Sure-Start-Practice-Guidance-2006.pdf>
- Department for Education and Skills (2006a). *Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance (Revised November 2006)*. Retrieved from: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20101008142207/http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/10939>
- Department for Education and Skills (2006b), *Sure Start planning and performance management guidance* Nottingham: DfES Publications.
- Department of Children Schools and Families. (2008). *Every Child Matters: Making it Happen*. (Ref. 00226-2008BKT-EN) Nottingham: DCSF Publications. Retrieved from:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100422121547/dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/resources-and-practice/ig00130/>

- Dilthey, W. (1976), The rise of hermeneutics. In P. Connerton (Ed.), *Critical Sociology: Selected Readings*, pp. 104-116. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.
- Dingwall, Robert. (2001), Notes Toward an Intellectual History of Symbolic Interactionism. *Symbolic Interaction*, 24(2), pp. 237-242.
- Downe, James., & Martin, Steve. (2006), Joined up policy in practice? The coherence and impacts of the local government modernisation agenda. *Local Government Studies*, 32(4), pp. 465-488.
- Du Gay, Paul. (2007), *Organizing Identity: Persons and Organizations after theory*: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Edgar, Iain R. (1999), The Imagework Method in Health and Social Science Research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 9(2), pp. 198-211.
- Edgley, Alison., & Avis, Mark. (2006). Interprofessional collaboration: sure start, uncertain futures. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, 20(4), pp. 433-433.
- Edwards, Anne. (2009). Relational agency in collaborations for the well-being of children and young people. *Journal of Children's Services*, 4(1), pp. 33-43.
- Eisenstadt, Naomi. (2011). *Providing a Sure Start: How Government Discovered Early Childhood*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Eisner, Elliot W. (1997). The Promise and Perils of Alternative Forms of Data Representation. *Educational Researcher*, 26(6), pp. 4-10.
- Elliott, Anthony. (2001). *Concepts of the Self* (1st Ed.), Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Engeström, Yrjö. (2003). The Discursive Construction of Collaborative Care. *Applied Linguistics*, 24(3), pp. 286-315.
- Engeström, Yrjö, Miettinen, Reijo, & Punamäki, Raija-Leena. (1999). *Perspectives on Activity Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Engeström, Yrjö. (2001). Expansive Learning at Work: toward an activity theoretical reconceptualization. *Journal of Education and Work*, 14(1), pp. 133-156.
- Engeström, Yrjö. (2004). New forms of learning in co-configuration work. *Journal of Workplace Learning: Employee Counselling Today*, 16(1/2), pp. 11-21.

- Ezzy, Douglas. (1998). Lived Experience and Interpretation in Narrative Theory: Experiences of Living with HIV/AIDS. *Qualitative Sociology*, 21(2), pp. 169-179.
- Fagerberg, I. (2004), Registered Nurses' work experiences: personal accounts integrated with professional identity. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 46(3), pp. 284-291.
- Farquhar, Sandy. (2010), *Ricoeur, Identity and Early Childhood*. Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Farrell, Catherine., & Morris, Jonathan. (2003), The 'Neo-Bureaucratic' State: Professionals, Managers and Professional Managers in Schools, General Practices and Social Work. *Organization*, 10(1), pp. 129-156.
- Farrell, Catherine., & Morris, Jonathan. (2007), The 'post-bureaucratic' public sector organization. New organizational forms and HRM in ten UK public sector organizations. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 18(9), pp. 1575-1588.
- Fenner, Patricia. (2012). What Do We See?: Extending Understanding of Visual Experience in the Art Therapy Encounter. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 29(1), pp. 11-18.
- Field, F. (2010). *The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults*. (The report of the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances). Great Britain: HMSO. Retrieved from: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110120090128/http://povertyreview.independent.gov.uk/media/20254/poverty-report.pdf>
- Finlay, Linda. (2002). Negotiating the swamp: the opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice. *Qualitative Research*, 2(2), pp. 209-230.
- Fletcher, Joyce K. (2004). The paradox of postheroic leadership: An essay on gender, power, and transformational change. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 15(5), pp. 647-661.
- Foucault, M. (1988). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (1st American ed.). (Gordon, C., Marshall, L., Mepham, J. and Sopher, K. Trans.), New York: Random House Pantheon. (Collated writings originally individually published: 1972, 1975, 1976, 1977).
- Foucault, M. (2001) *The order of things: an archeology of the human sciences* (Tavistock/Routledge Trans.), London: Routledge. (Originally published 1966)
- Frost, Nick. . (2009). Leading children's services: some contemporary issues and challenges. *Journal of Children's Services*, 4(3), pp. 49-57.

- Frost, Nick., & Stein, Mike. (2009). Editorial: Outcomes of Integrated Working with Children and Young People. *Children & Society*, 23(5), pp. 315-315.
- Gadamer, Hans Georg. (2013). *Truth and Method*. (J. Weinsheimer & D.G. Marshall, Trans.), Bloomsbury Revelations Series, London: Bloomsbury Academic. (Originally published 1960)
- Gallagher, Shaun. (2012). *Phenomenology*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Garfinkel, Harold. (1984). *Studies in ethnomethodology*. Cambridge: Polity Press (Original work published 1967).
- Gauntlett, D. (2007). *Creative Explorations: new approaches to identities and audiences*. London: Routledge.
- Gauntlett, D. (2011). *Making is Connecting: The Social Meaning of Creativity, from DIY and Knitting to YouTube and Web 2.0*, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Gauntlett, D., & Holzwarth, P. (2006). Creative and visual methods for exploring identities. *Visual Studies*, 21(1), pp. 82-91.
- Gergen, Kenneth J. (2009). *An invitation to social construction* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publishing.
- Gergen, Kenneth. (1991). *The Saturated Self*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gherardi, Silvia. (1996). Gendered Organizational Cultures: Narratives of Women Travellers in a Male World. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 3(4), pp. 187-201.
- Gherardi, Silvia., & Poggio, Barbara. (2007). Tales of Ordinary Leadership. A Feminist Approach to Experiential Learning. In M. Reynolds & R. Vince (Eds.), *The Handbook of Experiential Learning and Management Education*, pp. 155-168. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Giddens, Anthony. (1991). *Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford University Press.
- Glass, Norman. (2006). Sure Start: where did it come from; where is it going? *Journal of Children's Services*, 1(1), pp. 51-57.
- Goffman, Erving. (1990). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Reprint Ed.): London: Penguin. (Originally published 1959)
- Goldenberg, Herbert., & Goldenberg, Irene. (2011). *Family Therapy: An Overview* (International Ed of 8th Revised Ed.). Belmont, CA.: Brooks/Cole.

- Griffiths, Morwenna. (1995). *Feminisms and the Self: The Web of Identity*. London: Routledge.
- Hamill, P. (2013), *Embodied Leadership: The Somatic Approach to Developing Your Leadership*. London: Kogan Page.
- Hassan, Lamiece, Spencer, Joy, & Hogard, Elaine. (2006), Managing Sure Start in partnership. *Community practitioner : the journal of the Community Practitioners' & Health Visitors' Association*, 79(8), pp. 247-251.
- Heath, C., J. Hindmarsh 2002. 'Analysing Interaction: Video, ethnography and situated conduct.' In May, T. (Ed.) *Qualitative Research in Action*. London: Sage, pp. 99-121.
- Heidegger, M. (2010). *Being and Time* (A Revised Edition of the Stambaugh Translation), Oxford: Basil Blackwell. (Originally published 1927)
- Henare, Amira., Holbraad, Martin. , & Wastell, Sari. (Eds.). (2007), *Thinking through things - theorising artefacts ethnographically*. London: Routledge.
- Hesse-Biber, Sharlene J. Nagy. (Ed.). (2011), *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis* (2nd Ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Hicks, Mary W., Schuchts, Robert A., & Zoda, Michael. (1986), Maps and mapmaking: Developing the systemic paradigm of family functioning. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 8(2), pp. 87-100.
- Hill, Dorothy Hollandpel., & Cole, Michael. (1995), Between Discourse and Schema: Reformulating a Cultural-Historical Approach to Culture and Mind. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 26(4), pp. 475-489.
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell. (2003). *The managed heart: commercialization of human feeling*. Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press.
- Holland, D. & Cole, M. (1995), Between discourse and schema: reformulating a cultural-historical approach to culture and mind, *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 26 (4), pp.475-490.
- Holmes, Janet. (2005). Story-telling at work: a complex discursive resource for integrating personal, professional and social identities. *Discourse Studies*, 7(6), pp. 671-700.
- Holstein, J. A., & Gubrium, J. F. (1995), *The Active Interview*, London: Sage Publications.
- Holstein, James A., & Gubrium, J. F. (2000), *The Self We Live By: Narrative Identity in a Postmodern World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hood, Rick. (2012), Complexity and Integrated Working in Children's Services. *British Journal of Social Work*.

House of Commons (28th July 2010). *Examination of Witnesses* (Question Numbers 60-72). Great Britain: HMSO Retrieved from: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmeduc/395-i/395-i05.htm>.

Hughes, J. , Jewson, N. , & Unwin, L. (Eds.). (2007). *Communities of practice: critical perspectives*. London: Routledge.

Husserl, E. (1970) *The crisis of European sciences and transcendental phenomenology: an introduction to phenomenological philosophy* (D. Carr, Trans.) (Northwestern studies in phenomenology & existential philosophy series), Evanston, IL.: Northwestern University Press. (Two parts (1936) originally published 1954)

Husserl, E. (2012). *Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology* (Boyce, W.R. Trans.). London: Routledge. (Originally published 1931)

H.M. Treasury. Great Britain. (1998), Modern public services for Britain: investing in reform : comprehensive spending review : new public spending plans 1999-2002. (Cm: 4011), London: Stationery Office. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/260743/4011.pdf

H.M. Treasury. Great Britain. (2002) Opportunity and security for all: Investing in an enterprising, fairer Britain. London: HMSO. Retrieved from: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100407164511/http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spend_sr02_repindex.htm

H.M. Treasury. Great Britain. (2003), Every Child Matters (Cm 5860). London: HMSO. Retrieved from: <https://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/downloadableDocs/EveryChildMatters.pdf>

H.M. Treasury, Great Britain. (2004), *Choice for parents, the best start for children: a ten year strategy for childcare*. (Ref. 991151) London: HMSO. Retrieved from: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/HMT-991151.pdf>.

Isaac, P., & Trodd, L. (2008), Sustaining leadership learning: the tutor and mentor voice on NPQICL. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 16(1), pp. 39-52.

Jasper, David. (2004), *A short introduction to hermenutics*. Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press.

- John, K. (2008), Sustaining the leaders of children's centres: the role of leadership mentoring. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 16(1), pp. 53-66.
- Jones, Caroline., & Pound, Linda. (2008), *Leadership and Management in the Early Years: A Practical Guide*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Jones, L. (2010), Reflexivity as a Ground-Clearing Activity Within the Context of Early Years' Pedagogy. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(5), pp. 342-348.
- Jupp, Eleanor. (2013), Enacting parenting policy? The hybrid spaces of Sure Start Children's Centres. *Children's Geographies*, 11(2), pp. 173-187.
- Kaiser, Rachel. (2002), Fixing Identity by Denying Uniqueness: An Analysis of Professional Identity in Medicine. *Journal of Medical Humanities*, 23(2), pp. 95-105.
- Kaplan, David M. (2003), *Ricoeur's Critical Theory* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Kaplan, David M. (Ed.), (2008). *Reading Ricoeur*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Katila, Saija., & Meriläinen, Susan. (2002), Metamorphosis: From 'Nice Girls' to 'Nice Bitches': Resisting Patriarchal Articulations of Professional Identity. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 9(3), pp. 336-354.
- Kessler, S.J., & McKenna, W. (1984), *Gender: An Ethnomethodological Approach*. (2nd Ed.), New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Knight, M. T. D., Wykes, T., & Hayward, P. (2003), 'People don't understand': an investigation of stigma in schizophrenia using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). *Journal of Mental Health*, 12(3), pp. 209-222.
- Knowles, J. G., & Cole, A. L. (Eds.) (2008), *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues*. London: Sage Publications.
- Knowles, M. S., Holton, E.F., & Swanson, R.A. (2011), *The Adult Learner: The Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development* (7th Ed.). London: Routledge.
- Kolb, D. (1983), *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. London: Prentice Hall.
- Kreiner, Glen E., Hollensbe, Elaine C., & Sheep, Mathew L. (2006). On the edge of identity: Boundary dynamics at the interface of individual and organizational identities. *Human Relations*, 59(10), pp. 1315-1341.

- Laffin, Martin. (2008). Local Government Modernisation in England: A Critical Review of the LGMA Evaluation Studies. *Local Government Studies*, 34(1), pp. 109-125.
- Lant, V. *Culture Construct*, Children's Centre Leader Reader (2012, January/February) Retrieved from:
<http://www.ccleaderreader.com/attachments/File/JAN2012FINAL-2i.pdf>
- LaPointe, Kirsi. (2010). Narrating career, positioning identity: Career identity as a narrative practice. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 77(1), pp.1-9.
- Lasky, Sue. (2005). A sociocultural approach to understanding teacher identity, agency and professional vulnerability in a context of secondary school reform. *Teaching and teacher education*, 21(8), pp. 899-916.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991), *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lawler, Stephanie. (2007), *Identity: Sociological Perspectives*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Leadbetter, Jane., Daniels, Harry., Edwards, Anne., Martin, Deirdre., Middleton, David., Popova, Anna., . . . Brown, Steve. (2007), Professional learning within multi-agency children's services: researching into practice. *Educational Research*, 49(1), pp. 83-98.
- Lewis, Jane. (2011), From Sure Start to Children's Centres: An Analysis of Policy Change in English Early Years Programmes. *Journal of Social Policy*, 40(1), pp. 71-88.
- Lewis, Jane, Roberts, Jonathan, & Finnegan, Cathy. (2011), Making the Transition from Sure Start Local Programmes to Children's Centres, 2003–2008. *Journal of Social Policy*, 40(3), pp. 595-612.
- Lewis, Michael., & Staehler, Tanja. (2010), *Phenomenology: an introduction*. London: Continuum.
- Lieblich, Amia., & Josselson, Rith Ellen. (1994), *Exploring Identity and Gender: The Narrative Study of Lives* (Vol. 2). London: Sage Publications.
- Lindgren, Monica., & Wåhlin, Nils. (2001). Identity construction among boundary-crossing individuals. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 17(3), pp. 357-377.
- Lister, R. (2004). The Third Way's social investment state. In J. D. Lewis & R. Surrender (Eds.), *Welfare state change: Towards a Third Way?*, pp. 157-182. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Lister, Ruth. (2003). Investing in the Citizen- workers of the Future: Transformations in Citizenship and the State under New Labour. *Social Policy & Administration*, 37(5), pp. 427-443.
- Lister, Ruth. (2006). Children (but not women) first: New Labour, child welfare and gender. *Critical Social Policy*, 26(2), pp. 315-335.
- Mandell, D. (2007). *Revisiting the Use of Self: Questioning Professional Identities*: Canadian Scholars Press.
- Manning-Morton, J. (2006). The Personal is Professional: professionalism and the birth to threes practitioner. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 7(1), pp. 42-52.
- Maravelias, C. (2003). Post-bureaucracy – control through professional freedom. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 16(5), pp. 547-566.
- Margolis, Eric., & Pauwels, Luc. (Eds.) (2011), *The SAGE Handbook of Visual Research Methods*. London: Sage Publishing.
- Matthew, Eriksen. (2008), Leading adaptive organizational change: self-reflexivity and self-transformation. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 21(5), pp. 622-640.
- Mavin, S., Bryans, P., & Waring, T. (2004). Unlearning gender blindness: new directions in management education. *Management Decision*, 42(3/4), pp. 565-578.
- Mavin, Sharon., & Grandy, Gina. (2012). Doing gender well and differently in management. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 27(4), pp.218 – 231.
- McAdams, Dan P. (1997), *The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self*. London: The Guildford Press.
- McDowall Clark, Rory. & Murray, Janet. (2012), *Reconceptualizing leadership in the early years*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- McGillivray, Gill. (2008). Nannies, nursery nurses and early years professionals: constructions of professional identity in the early years workforce in England. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 16(2), pp. 242-254.
- McGoldrick, Monica., Gerson, Randy., & Petry, Sueli. (2008). *Genograms: Assessment and Intervention* (3rd Ed.). New York, USA: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Mead, G. H. (1967), *Mind, Self, and Society: From the Perspective of a Social Behaviorist*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Originally compiled 1934)

- Miller, Linda., & Cable, Carrie. (Eds.) (2010). *Professionalization, Leadership and Management in the Early Years*. London: Sage Publications.
- Miller, Linda., Dalli, Carmen., & Urban, Mathias. (Eds.) (2012). *Early Childhood Grows Up: Towards a Critical Ecology of the Profession*. London: Springer.
- Mills, J.H., & Thurlow, A. (2009), Change, talk and sensemaking, *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 22(5), pp. 459-479.
- Moon, Jennifer. (2004). *A Handbook of Reflective and Experiential Learning: Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Morrow, Gillian., & Malin, Nigel. (2007), Models of interprofessional working within a Sure Start "Trailblazer" Programme. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, 21(4), pp. 445-457.
- Moss, P. (2004), Sure Start. *Journal of Education Policy*, 19(5), pp. 631-634.
- Moyles, Janet. (2006). *Effective Leadership and Management in the Early Years*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Muijs, Daniel., Aubrey, Carol., Harris, Alma., & Briggs, Mary. (2004). How Do They Manage?: A Review of the Research on Leadership in Early Childhood. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 2(2), pp. 157-169.
- Munro, Eileen. (2011). *The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report A child-centred system*. Great Britain: HMSO. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/munro-review-of-child-protection-final-report-a-child-centred-system>
- Murray, C.D., & Harrison, B. (2004), The meaning and experience of being a stroke survivor: an interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 26(13), pp. 808-816.
- 4Children (October, 2013), *Children's Centre Census 2013*, Retrieved July 11th, 2014 from 4Children website: <http://www.4children.org.uk/Resources/Detail/Children-Centre-Census-2013>
- National College for School Leadership. *National Standards for Leaders of Sure Start Children's Centres*. (2007). Nottingham: DfES publications. Retrieved from: http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/7612/1/National_Standards_CC_Leadership.pdf.
- National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership*. (n.d.). Retrieved 7th July, 2014, from: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20101012010703/http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/index/professional-development/npqicl.htm>

- Newman, Janet., & McKee, Bob. (2005), Beyond the New Public Management? Public services and the social investment state. *Policy & Politics*, 33(4), pp. 657-657.
- Nic Craith, Máiréad. (2012), *Narratives of Place, Belonging and Language: An Intercultural Perspective*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Novak, J. D., and Gowin, D. R. (1984), *Learning How to Learn*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Nutbrown, C. (2012), *Foundations for Quality: The independent review of early education and childcare qualifications*. (Final Report, Ref. DFE-00068-2012). Nottingham: DfE publications. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nutbrown-review-foundations-for-quality>
- NVivo. (2013) [Computer software] Warrington, Cheshire, UK: QSR International.
- O'Connell, D. J., McNeely, E. , & Hall, D.T. (2008), Unpacking Personal Adaptability at Work. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 14(3), pp. 248-259.
- Oliver, C., Mooney, A., & Statham, J. (2010). *Integrated Working: A Review of the Evidence*. Thomas Coram Research Institute, Institute of Education, University of London. .
- Oliver, Paul. (2006), *The SAGE Dictionary of Social Research Methods*. London: Sage Publications.
- Osgood, J. (2004), Time to get down to business? The responses of early years practitioners to entrepreneurial approaches to professionalism. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 2(1), pp. 5-24.
- Osgood, Jayne. (2006), Professionalism and performativity: the feminist challenge facing early years practitioners. *Early Years*, 26(2), pp. 187-199.
- Osgood, Jayne. (2009), Childcare workforce reform in England and 'the early years professional': a critical discourse analysis. *Journal of Education Policy*, 24(6), pp. 733-751.
- Osgood, Jayne. (2010), Reconstructing Professionalism in ECEC: The Case for the "Critically Reflective Emotional Professional". *Early Years: An International Journal of Research and Development*, 30(2), pp. 119-133.
- Osgood, Jayne. (2012), *Narratives from the nursery: negotiating professional identities in early childhood*. Oxon: Routledge.

- Osgood, Jayne. (2006), Deconstructing Professionalism in Early Childhood Education: resisting the regulatory gaze. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 7(1), pp.5-14.
- Pagis, Michal. (2009), Embodied Self-Reflexivity. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 72(3), pp. 265-283.
- Pattison, Stephen. (2007). *Seeing things: deepening relations with visual artefacts*. London: SCM Press.
- Phelan, J. (2005). Who's here? Thoughts on narrative identity and narrative imperialism. *Narrative*, 13, pp. 205-211.
- Pink, S. (2013), *Doing visual ethnography*, London: Sage.
- Plummer, Ken. (1995), *Telling sexual stories: power, change and social worlds*. London: Routledge.
- Plummer, Ken. (2001), *Documents of Life 2: An Invitation to a Critical Humanism* (Revised Edition). London: Sage Publications.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1988), *Narrative knowing and human sciences*, New York: State University of New York Press.
- Prosser, J. and Loxley, A. (2007) Enhancing the contribution of visual methods to inclusive education. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd. Vol. 7, No.1, pp. 55–68.
- Pugh, Gillian., & Duffy, Bernadette. (2013), *Contemporary Issues in the Early Years* (6th Edition). London: Sage Publications.
- Raelin, Joe. (2011), From leadership-as-practice to leaderful practice. *Leadership*, 7(2), pp. 195-211.
- Ramsey, Caroline. (2011), Provocative theory and a scholarship of practice. *Management Learning*, 42(5), pp. 469-483.
- Reis, Davi S. (2011). Non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) and professional legitimacy: a sociocultural theoretical perspective on identity transformation. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, (208), pp. 139-160.
- Richards, H., & Swanger, J. (2008). *The Dilemmas of Social Democracies: Overcoming Obstacles to a More Just World*. Oxford: Lexington Books.
- Richards, Keith. (2006). *Language and Professional Identity: Aspects of Collaborative Identity*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ricoeur, Paul. (2003). *The rule of metaphor: the creation of meaning in Language* (Czerny, R., McLaughlin, K. and Costello S.J, J. Trans.). London: Routledge. (Originally published 1975).

- Ricoeur, Paul. (1987). *Fallible Man: Philosophy of the Will* (C. A. Kelbley, Trans. Revised ed.). Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press. (Originally published 1960)
- Ricoeur, Paul. (2007). *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics* (Ihde, D. Ed.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. (Originally published 1969).
- Ricoeur, Paul. (1976). *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*. Texas: Texas Christian University Press.
- Ricoeur, Paul. (1981). *Hermeneutics and the human sciences: essays on language, action and interpretation*. (Thompson, J.B., Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ricoeur, Paul. (1990a). *Time and Narrative, Vol 1*. (New Edition) London: University of Chicago Press. (Originally published 1983)
- Ricoeur, Paul. (1983). On interpretation. In A. Monteriore (Ed.), *Philosophy in France today* (pp. 175-197). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ricoeur, Paul. (2008). *From text to action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II* (K. Blamey & J. B. Thompson, Trans.) (2nd Edition). (Continuum Impacts Series), London: Continuum (Originally published 1986)
- Ricoeur, Paul. (1990b). *Time and narrative, Volume 3* (New Edition). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Originally published 1985).
- Ricoeur, Paul. (1994). *Oneself as another* (K. Blamey, Trans.). London: University of Chicago Press. (Originally published 1990)
- Ricoeur, Paul. (2005). *The Course of Recognition* (D. Pellauer, Trans.). London: Harvard University Press.
- Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. London: Sage Publications.
- Robinson, M., & Cottrell, D. (2009). Health professionals in multi-disciplinary and multi-agency teams: changing professional practice. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, 19(6), pp. 547-560.
- Robson, Coilin. (2011). *Real world research* (3rd Edition). Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons.
- Robson, Ian. (2013). Women's leadership as narrative practice: identifying 'tent making', 'dancing' and 'orchestrating' in UK Early Years Services. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 20(6): Special Edition: Experiences of Women Leaders in Alternative Sites of Organization, pp. 338-358.
- Rodd, Jillian. (1997). Learning to be Leaders: Perceptions of Early Childhood Professionals about Leadership Roles and Responsibilities. *Early Years*, 18(1), pp.40-44.

- Rodd, Jillian. (2013), *Leadership in Early Childhood*. (4th Edition) Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Rose, Gillian. (2011), *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials* (3rd Ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Rosenau, Pauline Marie. (1992), *Postmodernism and the Social Sciences: Insights, Inroads and Intrusions*. . Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Sannino, A., Daniels, H., & Gutierrez, K. D. (Eds.) (2009), *Learning and Expanding with Activity Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schleiermacher, Friedrich. (1998), *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings (Hermeneutik und Kritik mit besonderer Beziehung auf das Neue Testament)* (A. Bowie, Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schon, Donald A. (1991), *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. (New Edition) Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Schutz, Alfred. (1973), *Structures of the Life-World: Vol 1*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Schutz, Alfred. (1972), *The phenomenology of the social world*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Schwalbe, Michael L. (1983). Language and the Self: An Expanded View from a Symbolic Interactionist Perspective. *Symbolic Interaction*, 6(2), pp. 291-306.
- Schwandt, T. A. (2003). Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry: Interpretativism, hermeneutics and social constructionism. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and issues*, pp. 292-331. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications.
- Schweiker, William. (1988), Beyond Imitation: Mimetic Praxis in Gadamer, Ricoeur, and Derrida. *The Journal of Religion*, 68(1), pp. 21-38.
- Searle, John R. (1969), *Speech Acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Seigel, Jerrold. (2005), *The idea of the self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sharp, C., Lord, P., Handscomb, G., Macleod, S., Southcott, C., George, N., & Jeffes, J. (2012). *Highly Effective Leadership in Children's Centres*.

Nottingham: National College for School Leadership. Retrieved from:
<http://www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/publications/ELCC01/ELCC01.pdf>

- Shinebourne, P., & Smith, J.A. (2009). Alcohol and the self: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of the experience of addiction and its impact on the sense of self and identity. *Addiction Research & Theory*, 17(2), pp. 152-167.
- Simms, Karl. (2003). *Paul Ricoeur*. London: Routledge.
- Simpson, Donald. (2010), Being professional? Conceptualising early years professionalism in England. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* , 18(1), pp. 5-14.
- Singh, Abhigyan. (2011). Visual artefacts as boundary objects in participatory research paradigm. *Journal of Visual art Practice*, 10(1), pp.35-50.
- Sioban, Nelson. (2007). Embodied knowing? The constitution of expertise as moral practice in nursing. *Texto & Contexto - Enfermagem*, 16(1), pp. 136-141.
- Siraj-Blatchford, I., Sylva, K., Stella, M., Gilden, R., & Bell, D. (2002). *Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years* (REPEY), (DfES Research Report 356) . Nottingham: DfES Publications.
- Siraj-Blatchford, Iram. & Hallet, Elaine. (2013), *Effective and Caring Leadership in the Early Years*. London: Sage Publications.
- Siraj-Blatchford, Iram., & Manni, Laura. (2007). *Effective leadership in the early years sector: the ELEYS study*. London: University of London, Institute of Education.
- Slay, Holly S, & Smith, Delmonize A. (2011). Professional identity construction: Using narrative to understand the negotiation of professional and stigmatized cultural identities. *Human Relations*, 64(1), pp. 85-107.
- Sloper, P. (2004). Facilitators and barriers for co ordinated multi agency services. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 30(6), pp. 571-580.
- Smith, J.A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009), *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Snow, D. A., & Anderson, L. (1987), Identity work among the homeless: the verbal construction and avowal of personal identities. *American Journal of Sociology*, 92, pp. 1336-1371.
- Spencer, Stephen. (2011), *Visual Research Methods in the Social Sciences: Awakening Visions*. London: Routledge.

- Squire, C. (2008), From experience centred to socioculturally-orientated approaches to narrative. In M. Andrews, C. Squire & M. Tamboukou (Eds.), *Doing narrative research*. London: Sage publications.
- Strawson, Galen. (2004), Against Narrativity. *Ratio*, 17(4), pp. 428-452.
- Swann, William B., Johnson, Russell E., & Bosson, Jennifer K. (2009), Identity negotiation at work. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 29, pp. 81-109.
- Tan, Heather., Wilson, Anne., & Olver, Ian. (2009), Ricoeur's Theory of Interpretation: An Instrument for Data Interpretation in Hermeneutic Phenomenology. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(4), pp. 1-15.
- Taylor, Carolyn. & White, Susan. (2000). *Practising reflexivity in health and welfare: making knowledge*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Taylor, Charles. (1985a). *Human agency and language* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, Charles. (1985b). *Philisophical Papers: Volume 2, Philosophy and the Human Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, Charles. (1989). *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- The Children's Partnership (n.d) *Foundation Years – great early years and childcare*, Retreived from: <http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/> (14th July 2014)
- Thiselton, Anthony C. (2009), *Hermeneutics: An Introduction*. Michigan: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Company.
- Toynbee, Polly. (1999, 20th July). Comment and Analysis: Labour's plan to eradicate poverty is under way, *The Guardian*. p.18
- Trodd, Lyn. (2012), *Professional Learning for Children's Centre Leaders*. (Doctoral Thesis), University of Hertfordshire, Hertfordshire. Retrieved from: <http://hdl.handle.net/2299/10430>
- Trodd, Lynn., & Chivers, Leo. (Eds.), (2011), *Interprofessional working in practice: Learning and working together for children and families*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Tsui, Amy. B. M. (2007). Complexities of Identity Formation: A Narrative Inquiry of an EFL Teacher. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41(4), pp. 657-680.
- Turner, Jane., & Mavin, Sharon. (2007, June), Exploring individual leadership journeys through authentic leadership theory. Paper presented in TheoryStream: Leadership and Management Development of the 8th International Conference on HRD Research and Practice across

Europe. Oxford Brookes University. Retrieved from:
<http://www.ufhrd.co.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2008/06/turn-14-fp.pdf>

- Turner, Jane., & Mavin, Sharon. (2008). What can we learn from senior leader narratives? The strutting and fretting of becoming a leader. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 29(4), pp. 376-391.
- Van den Hengel, J. (Ed.), (2002). *Ricoeur as Another: the Ethics of Subjectivity*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Venema, H.I. (2000). *Identifying selfhood: imagination, narrative and hermeneutics in the thought of Paul Ricoeur*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Vevers, Simon. (14th December 2005). Powers of Attraction, *Nursery World*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/nursery-world/news/1082064/powers-attraction>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes (A. R. Luria, M. Lopez-Morillas & M. Cole [with J. V. Wertsch], Trans.) Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. (Original work [ca. 1930-1934])
- Wackerhausen, Steen. (2009). Collaboration, professional identity and reflection across boundaries. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, 23(5), pp. 455-473.
- Wartofsky, M. (1973). *Models*. Dordrecht: D. Reide.
- Warwick, Robert. , & Board, Douglas. . (2013). *The Social Development of Leadership and Knowledge: A Reflexive Inquiry into Research and Practice*. London: Palgrave Macmillan
- Watson, C. (2006). Narratives of Practice and the Construction of Identity in Teaching. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 12(5), pp. 509-526.
- Watson, Mark., & McMahon, Mary. (2012). Career adaptability: a qualitative understanding from the stories of older women. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 80(3), pp. 762-768.
- Watson, T. J. (2009). Narrative, life story and manager identity: A case study in autobiographical identity work. *Human Relations*, 62(3), pp. 425-452.
- Weick, K.E. (1995). *Sensemaking in Organisations*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Weick, K.E. (2009). *Making sense of the organisation: the impermanent organization* (Vol. 2). Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons.

- Weick, Karl E. (2012). Organized sensemaking: a commentary on processes of interpretive work. *Human Relations*, 65(1), pp. 141-153.
- Wenger, Etienne. (1999). *Communities of practice: learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wertsch, J. T. (1991). *Voices of the mind: a sociocultural approach to mediated action*. London: Harvard University Press.
- West, William. (2001). Beyond grounded theory: The use of a heuristic approach to qualitative research. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 1(2), pp. 126-131.
- Wetton, N. M., and McWhirter, J. (1998), Images and Curriculum Development in Health Education. In: J Prosser (Ed.) *Image-based Research: A Sourcebook for Qualitative Researchers*. Falmer Press. London.
- Whalley, Margy. (2006). Leadership in Integrated Centres and Services for Children and Families - a Community Development Approach: Engaging with the Struggle. *Childrenz Issues: Journal of the Children's Issues Centre*, 10(2), pp. 8-13.
- Whalley, Margy. (1995). Is it possible to exert influence as a practitioner? *International Journal of Educational Management*, 9(3), pp. 14-18.
- Whalley, Margy. (2007). *Involving parents in their children's learning*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Whalley, Margy., Chandler, Rachel., John, Karen., Reid, Lindsay., Thorpe, Sheila., & Everitt, John. (2008). Developing and sustaining leadership learning communities: implications of NPQICL rollout for public policy local praxis. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 16(1), pp.5-38.
- Williams, Benjamin. (2011), The Big Society: Post- Bureaucratic Social Policy in the Twenty- first Century? *The Political Quarterly*, 82 (Supp.), pp. 120-132.
- Woodrow, C., & Busch, G. (2008), Repositioning early childhood leadership as action and activism. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 16(1), pp. 83-93.
- Wrzesniewski, Amy, Dutton, Jane E., & Debebe, Gelaye. (2003), Interpersonal sensemaking and the meaning of work. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 25, pp.93-135.
- Zahavi, Dan. (2002), *Husserl's Phenomenology*, Redwood City, CA.: Stanford University Press.

